

DOCTORAL THESIS

Tending the Tall Poppy: An investigation into secondary age pupils' experience of education for the highly able

Weeds, John

Award date:
2013

Awarding institution:
University of Roehampton

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal ?

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Tending the Tall Poppy:
An investigation into secondary age pupils' experience of
education for the highly able

By

John I. Weeds MA, MPhil, NPQH, PGCE

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of EdD

School of Education,
University of Roehampton and Kingston University

2013

Abstract

This research sought to examine current concerns about the quality of the educational experience of secondary age pupils who have the potential to achieve highly in academic tests. It asked about the best means of nurturing such pupils, the experiences which are most likely to affect their educational achievement and wellbeing and, lastly, what factors need to be taken into account to ensure that they are likely to fulfil their potential. An empirical study was undertaken in four case study schools. Interviews were carried out in four secondary schools in the south-east of England – twelve with groups of pupils and a further ten with a selection of staff. Additional evidence was gained from focus group studies involving parents. Interview data were analysed by the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) method.

Four clusters of findings emerged. These included: pupils' experience of teaching and learning; their experience of school support; aspiration and anxiety; potential inhibitors of enjoyment and achievement. Further analysis suggested that highly able pupils might have pronounced preferences for particular pedagogies, including practical or collaborative work. Creative activities were also highly valued if accompanied by good lesson planning, sound behaviour management, along with approachability and humour on the part of the teacher. Pupils' concerns centred on negative peer pressure and accelerated entry to public exams. Some teachers and support staff were concerned by instances of depression amongst high ability pupils. Staff showed high levels of expertise in managing such issues, especially where ASD/Asperger's was a factor. Parents reported anxieties about their children's future prospects in higher education. They sometimes lacked confidence in knowing how to support their child's learning. They also appeared to have experienced some negative peer pressure of their own 'at the school gates' from fellow parents, sometimes related to their child's high level of academic success.

Finally, school leaders spoke of their schools' initiatives for supporting their highly academic pupils. These included schoolwide enrichment designed to stretch the most able, but based on an inclusive philosophy and an overt culture of praise. On balance, pupils in the schools sampled appeared to be thriving.

'It does not even matter much whether we succeed in finding the solution or understanding the proof, although it is important to try really hard to do so. Never in any case whatever is a genuine effort of the attention wasted. It always has its effect on the spiritual plane and in consequence on the lower one of the intelligence, for all spiritual light lightens the mind.'

Simone Weil, *Waiting for God*

Contents

Abstract	2
List of Tables and Figures	11
Glossary	12
Chapter 1 – Introduction: the context of the research	14
1.1 Introduction	14
1.1.1 A working definition of education and the notion of high ability	14
1.1.2 Scope of the research	15
1.1.3 Setting the Context	17
1.2 The research background	18
1.2.1 Terminology	19
1.2.2 Target population	20
1.3 Wider debates	21
1.4 Statement of the problem	22
1.4.1 Defining high achievement	23
1.4.2 Measuring potential	24
1.5 Pupil wellbeing	24
1.6 The Research Questions	25
1.7 Aims of the project.....	25
1.8 Structure and Organisation.....	26
Chapter 2 – Review of the Literature.....	29
2.1 Introduction	29
2.2. Structure of the analysis of the related literature	29
2.3 Part One: Cognitive and behavioural theories about high achievement	32
2.3.1 Hereditability and psychometric testing.....	32
2.3.2 The reification of intelligence and Bloom’s taxonomy	33
2.3.3 Intelligence, giftedness and schooling.....	35
2.3.3 The ‘English Model’ of Gifted and Talented Education.....	37
2.4 Summary.....	40
2.5 Part Two: Pedagogy and wellbeing in education for high achievement.....	41
2.5.1 Introduction.....	41
2.5.2 Holistic approaches and the needs of high achieving pupils	43

2.5.3 Emotional intelligence and the wellbeing of high achievers	44
2.5.4 Inclusive approaches	47
2.5.5 Vygotskian theory and pedagogy for high achievers	47
2.5.6 Equality of Challenge	48
2.5.7 Mindsets and the self-image of potential high achievers.....	49
2.6 Previous research on children’s experience of education for achievement	51
2.7 The perspective of parents	52
2.8 Assessment, aspiration and need	54
2.9 Summary of findings from the literature	55
2.9.1 The position of the learner – actual or potential high achiever?	55
2.9.2 Implications for the Methodology.....	56
2.9.3 Findings for the system context.....	56
2.10 Concluding discussion.....	58
Chapter 3 – Design and Methodology	59
3.1 The research questions.....	59
3.2 The philosophical basis	60
3.3 Theoretical framework of the Research Questions	60
3.3.1 Research Question One: How can high achieving pupils of secondary age be nurtured so that they fulfil their academic potential?	61
3.3.2 Research Question Two: What experiences affect high achieving pupils’ achievement and wellbeing? How can these be addressed?	61
3.3.3 Research Question Three: What do teachers need to know in order to maximize the achievement and wellbeing of highly academic pupils and minimise the impact of negative risk factors?	62
3.4 Design of the interview phase.....	62
3.5 Rationale for a case study design.....	65
3.6 Data Analysis.....	66
3.6.1 The Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) method	66
3.6.2 Characteristics of IPA method of data analysis.....	67
3.6.3 Proposed application of the IPA model	68
3.7 The strategy for implementation of the case studies	68
3.7.1 Construction of the case studies	69

3.7.2 Sampling of schools.....	70
3.8 Selection of interview participants.....	71
3.8.1 a) Members of Staff.....	71
3.8.1 b) Pupils	73
3.8.3 c) Parents.....	76
3.9 Implementation strategy – Studies One and Two	77
3.9.1 Ethical and practical considerations in implementing Studies One and Two	77
3.9.1a) Securing access.....	78
3.9.1b) Safeguarding	78
3.9.1c) Research assistant	80
3.9.1d) Capturing interview responses.....	80
3.9.1e) Location.....	81
3.9.1f) Language.....	81
3.9.1g) Post-interview actions	82
3.10 Ensuring reliability.....	82
3.11 Summary.....	83
Chapter 4 – Analysis and Evaluation of the initial Case Studies (Study One)	85
4.1 Introduction	85
4.2 Results of Study One interviews	85
4.3 Description of the Key Themes from Study One	86
4.3.1 Key Theme One: ‘Experience of Teaching and Learning’	86
4.3.1 a) Year 9 Pupils	87
4.3.1 b) Staff.....	88
4.3.1 c) Parents.....	89
4.3.2 Key Theme Two: ‘Pupil Support’	89
4.3.2a) Year 9 Pupils	90
4.3.2b) Staff.....	91
4.3.3 c) Parents.....	92
4.3.4 Key Theme Three: ‘Aspiration’	93
4.3.4a) Year 9 Pupils	93
4.3.4b) Staff.....	94
4.3.4c) Parents.....	95

4.3.5 Key Theme Four: 'Potential Inhibitors'	95
4.3.5a) Year 9 Pupils	96
4.3.5b) Staff.....	97
4.3.5c) Parents.....	97
4.4 Comparative analysis of themed findings from Study One.....	98
5.1 Introduction	100
5.2 Description of the Key and Constituent Themes from Study Two.....	101
5.2.1 Key Theme One: 'Facilitators of Learning amongst Potential High Achievers'.....	101
5.2.2 Analysis of Constituent Themes in Key Theme One.....	102
5.2.2a) Year 9 Pupils	102
5.2.2b) Staff.....	104
5.2.2c) Parents.....	106
5.2.3 Key Theme Two: 'School Systems'	107
5.2.4 Analysis of Constituent Themes in Key Theme Two	107
5.2.4a) Year 9 Pupils	107
5.2.4b) Staff.....	110
5.2.4c) Parents.....	110
5.2.5 Key Theme Three: 'Aspiration and Anxiety'	111
5.2.6 Analysis of Constituent Themes in Key Theme Three	112
5.2.6a) Year 9 Pupils	112
5.2.6b) Staff.....	114
5.2.6c) Parents.....	115
5.2.7 Key Theme Four: 'Institutional and Cultural Facilitators and Inhibitors'	116
5.2.8 Analysis of Constituent Themes in Key Theme Four	117
5.2.8a) Year 9 Pupils	117
5.2.8b) Staff.....	121
5.3 Comparative analysis of themed findings from Study Two	122
Summary.....	124
Chapter 6 – Reflection and Discussion	127
6.1 Introduction	127
6.2 Evaluation of the sample of schools.....	128
6.3 Evaluation of the pupil voice approach.....	130

6.4 Summary of the key findings	131
6.3 Experience of Teaching and Learning (first cluster findings)	133
6.3.1 Classroom experience	134
6.3.2 The influence of teachers and the impact of resources.....	135
6.3.3 School vision.....	136
6.3.4 Curriculum design.....	136
6.3.5 The climate for learning.....	136
6.3.6 First cluster findings and related literature	138
6.4 Pupil Support (second cluster findings).....	138
6.4.1 Strategic programmes and local approaches for potential high achievers.....	139
6.4.2 Management structures	141
6.4.3 Stakeholder perceptions	141
6.4.4 Second cluster findings and related literature.....	142
6.5 Aspiration and Anxiety (third cluster findings)	143
6.5.1 The focus on assessment.....	143
6.5.2 Higher education and careers	144
6.5.3 Pupil and parent anxiety	145
6.5.4 Third cluster findings and related literature	145
6.6 Potential Inhibitors (fourth cluster findings).....	146
6.6.1 School culture and high achievement.....	147
6.6.2 Peer culture.....	147
6.6.3 External factors.....	148
6.6.4 Fourth cluster findings and related literature	149
6.7 Summary.....	150
6.8 Re-engagement with the Research Questions	150
6.8.1 Findings for Research Question One: How can high achieving pupils of secondary age be nurtured so that they fulfil their academic potential?.....	150
6.8.2 Findings for Research Question Two: What experiences affect their achievement and wellbeing? How can these be addressed?	151
6.8.3 Findings for Research Question Three: What do teachers need to know in order to maximize the achievement and wellbeing of highly academic pupils and minimise the impact of negative risk factors?.....	151

6.9 Summary.....	152
Chapter 7 – Conclusions and Recommendations.....	154
7.1 Introduction	154
7.2 Classroom practice	154
7.2.1 Summary, recommendations and further thoughts	156
7.2.1a) Recommendations for practitioners.....	157
7.2.1b) An area for consideration by policymakers	158
7.3 School cultures and attitudes towards high achievement.....	158
7.3.1 Summary, recommendations and further thoughts	160
7.3.1a) Recommendations for school leaders	161
7.3.1b) An area for consideration by policymakers and professional networks.....	162
7.4 System-wide policy and practice	162
7.4.1 Summary, recommendation and further thoughts	163
7.4.1a) Recommendations for further research.....	164
7.4.1b) An area for consideration by Headteachers and policy makers.....	165
7.5 Concluding thoughts.....	165
Chapter 8 - Bibliography and References.....	167
Chapter 9: Appendices	180
Appendix 1: Bloom’s Taxonomy of Educational Objectives (Bloom 1956), noting the pre-eminence of higher order cognitive capabilities, such as evaluation and synthesis over knowledge	180
Appendix 2: Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow 1954), noting the pre-eminence of the actualisation of potential over other human needs.....	181
Appendix 3: Renzulli’s Three-Ring Conception of Giftedness (Renzulli 1978), noting the interaction of a range of capabilities in a construction of giftedness	182
Appendix 4: Sternberg’s Triarchic Theory of Intelligence (Sternberg 1984), noting the subsidiary status of knowledge acquisition in high intelligence	183
Appendix 5: Wallace’s TASC wheel (Wallace 1993), noting a characterisation of intelligence based on thinking skills conducive to an inclusive pedagogy	184
Appendix 6: Gagné’s (1985 and 2009) Differentiated Model of Giftedness (DMGT), noting a characterisation of giftedness based on the interaction of innate ability, intrapersonal skills, environmental factors and chance	185

Appendix 7: Sample Consent Form - Staff	186
Appendix 8: Sample Consent Form - Year 9 Pupils	187
Appendix 9: Sample Consent Form - Headteachers	188
Appendix 10: Interview Schedule for Staff, Study One	189
Appendix 11: Interview Schedule for Pupils, Study One	191
Appendix 12: Interview Schedule for Staff, Study Two.....	193
Appendix 13: Interview Schedule for Parents, Study Two.....	195
Appendix 14: Interim IPA analysis, Pupil Interview Transcript	196
Appendix 15: Pupil selection criteria	197
Appendix 16: Case Study school descriptors.....	199
School A	199
School B.....	200
School C.....	201
School D	202
Appendix 17: Pupil interview extracts sorted by theme	203
Appendix 18: Staff interview data from the Case Study schools sorted by theme ...	207
.....	210
Appendix 19: Parent interview data from Case Study schools C and D	211
Appendix 20: Transcript of interview with the SENCO at School C	212
Appendix 21: Transcript of interview with Y9 Pupils at School C.....	225
Appendix 22: Parent Focus Group, School C.....	243
Appendix 23: Gifted and Talented Eligibility Criteria (NAGTY 2006)	253
Appendix 24: Extracts from Learning Journal, noting reflections on pupil group interview technique.....	254

List of Tables and Figures

Table 1.1 Research structure and organisation of thesis.....	27
Table 2.1 Theories within the paradigm of intelligence based on Galton's (1865) conceptualisation, after Smithers and Robinson (2012).....	31
Table 2.2 Theories within the paradigm of giftedness based on Hollingworth's (1942) holistic conceptualisation, after Smithers and Robinson (2012)	42
Table 2.3 Table of constructs informing design of the project and derived from a review of the literature on education of the highly able	57
Figure 3.1 Sequence of phases in Study One and Study Two fieldwork	63
Table 3.1 Make-up of Case Study samples (Schools).....	70
Table 3.2 Make-up of Case Study samples (Staff only)	72
Table 3.3 Make-up of Case Study samples (Pupils only)	75
Table 3.4 Make-up of Case Study samples (Parents only)	76
Figure 3.2 Implementation strategy for Studies One and Two, after Yin's "Case Study Protocol" (Yin 2009).....	79
Table 4.1 Overview of the relationship between Key Themes and Research Questions, derived from IPA analysis of Study One interview data	87
Table 5.1 Overview of Key Theme and Constituent Theme relationship for Research Question One, derived from IPA analysis of Study Two interview data	102
Table 5.2 Overview of Key Theme and Sub-theme relationship for Research Question Two, derived from IPA analysis of Study Two interview data.....	108
Table 5.3 Overview of Key Theme and Sub-theme relationship for Research Question Two ("Aspiration"), derived from Study Two interview data.....	113
Table 5.4 Overview of Key Theme and Sub-theme relationship for Research Question Three, derived from IPA analysis of Study Two interview data	118

Glossary

Academy	- secondary school funded directly by the government through the EFA
ASCL	- Association of School and College Leaders
ASD	- Autistic Spectrum Disorder
CfBT	- Centre for British Teachers (Education Trust)
DCSF	- Department for Children, Schools and Families
DfE	- Department for Education
DfES	- Department for Education and Skills
EFA	- Education Funding Agency (previously the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA))
Foundation	- state-funded secondary school, with some Local Authority controls
GSHA	- Grammar School Heads' Association: http://gsha1.web.officelive.com
KS3/4	- Key Stage pupil groupings by age, thus KS3 = 11-14 year olds, KS4 = 14-16 year olds
LA	- Local Authority
LSA (ELSA)	- Learning Support Assistant / Emotional Learning Support Assistant
Maintained	- state-funded secondary school, with full Local Authority controls
NACE	- National Association for Able Children in Education: www.nace.co.uk
NAGTY	- National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth
NAHT	- National Association of Headteachers
OFSTED	- Office for Standards in Education
Oxbridge	- Universities of Oxford and Cambridge
PISA	- Programme for International Student Assessment: www.oecd.org/pisa
SEN (SENCO)	- Special Educational Needs/Special Educational Needs Coordinator
SNAP	- Scottish Network for Able Pupils
TLR	- Teaching and Learning Responsibility (schoolteacher pay allowance)

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the following sincerely for all their support and encouragement:

- Dr. Philip Mitchell, Chair of Governors, Reading School
- Dr. Mary Richardson, Principal Lecturer in Education, University of Roehampton
- Prof. Sue Llewellyn, Professor of Clinical Psychology, Warneford Hospital, Oxford, Farmington Fellow and Supervisor
- Ashley Wicken, Gifted and Talented Coordinator, Rochester Grammar School for Girls, Medway
- Simon O'Connor, Assistant Headteacher, Sir Joseph Williamson's Mathematical School, Rochester, Medway
- Jane O'Sullivan-Dale, Key Stage Coordinator, Blessed Hugh Faringdon School, Reading, Berkshire
- Dr. Carrie Winstanley, Principal Lecturer (Teaching and Learning), University of Roehampton
- Prof. Adam Ockleford, Professor of Music and Director, Applied Music Research Centre, University of Roehampton
- Caroline Beard, Reading School, Reading, Berkshire
- Sue Killoran and Katrina Malone of the Library at Harris Manchester College, University of Oxford
- Richard Lodge, The King's Centre, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire

Gracious thanks also to Fellows and Staff of the Farmington Institute and especially the Director, the Rev. Dr. Ralph Waller, Master of Harris Manchester College, University of Oxford.

Also thank you to Sophie Rogers, Special Educational Needs Coordinator, Reading School and my running partner Robert Pitchers for putting up with the rants!

In memory of Dr. David Hughes, my Classics teacher at Collyer's School in Horsham

This is for Mum and Dad... my lovely wife Sarah and outrageously tall sons, Tom, Henry and Jamie

Chapter 1 – Introduction: the context of the research

1.1 Introduction

This research was undertaken as a result of personal and professional reflection on the quality of the educational experience of highly able young people in our schools. After more than two decades of teaching and leading teachers in schools with strong academic traditions, I suspected that this experience had become increasingly unsatisfactory. Education in our schools appeared to have become constrained by the focus on grades, whilst opportunities to explore beyond the limitations of a subject specification more limited. In addition to the risk of boredom and disengagement observed by other commentators (notably, Smithers and Robinson (2012), Wallace et al. (2010), Winstanley (2004) and Leyden (2010)), a gap between aspiration on the one hand and wellbeing on the other was noticeable amongst potentially high achieving pupils. There appeared to be less and less incentive for teachers to experiment or take risks, but more and more of a need for them to do so. The evidence for this was anecdotal however. I wanted to find out if there was any verifiable substance to my suspicions. Almost all the pupils I have known to have become disengaged at school, or even depressed, have had the potential to achieve highly in examination terms and have fulfilled the various government criteria for identification as gifted and talented (Department for Education and Skills 2006: 4). The schools themselves were experienced in teaching for high achievement and the families concerned were an aspirational and supportive parent body. This investigation has attempted to uncover the reality today of education for potential high achievers and to do so by capturing the voices of pupils, staff and parents themselves. The following sections set out the drivers of the research and its scope.

1.1.1 A working definition of education and the notion of high ability

My strong belief is that education is a lifelong undertaking with the capacity to transform and enrich both the individual *and* the society within which (s)he lives and works. In carrying out this research I aim to fulfil a personal quest for new knowledge and contribute something to the sum of understanding about the particular issues for gifted learners. On the basis of my own experience of a transformational education, my

premise for this research is that education for high ability is but one aspect of a spectrum of teacher specialisms within an increasingly diverse professional enterprise. Wringe (2011) reminds us in his analysis of the meaning of teacher of education that “education is for life, not just for school” and in doing so states: “we do not work with uniform material – each child is unique”. This research subscribes to that view and develops it by arguing for a renewed focus on the child with actual or unrealised high ability.

1.1.2 Scope of the research

In order to arrive at an understanding of the essence of the problem with provision for high achievers, this research has also examined the current status of provision for gifted and talented pupils as a key contextual factor. Recent reports have suggested that political and funding developments have placed specialised provision for high achievers or gifted and talented programmes under severe strain (Baker 2010). A recent report published by the Sutton Trust has found, for example, that “policy and provision for the highly able in England is in a mess” (Smithers and Robinson 2012: i). This appeared to be due to a reallocation of resources at the expense, it seemed, of potentially high achieving pupils in our schools. Indeed, the Sutton Trust report could not have been more explicit:

The present government has decided to include the money previously earmarked for ‘gifted and talented’ in mainstream funding... How can the country move on from this sorry state of affairs? (Smithers and Robinson 2012: ii)

A little earlier the Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF, since 2010 re-structured as the Department for Education) had found in its evaluation of the demise of the National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth that “the sense of there being a gifted and talented community ... broadly pulling in the same direction ... has been lost” (DCSF 2009: 54, para 923). The Department for Education website at the time of writing carried a single page on “academically more able pupils” with but two specific provisions for “top performing pupils”, including the aims:

- [To enable] one high performing pupil from every secondary school ... to visit a Russell Group University.

- [To make] available Level 6 National Curriculum tests for year 6 pupils ... to ensure stretch is provided for the most able primary school pupils.
(DfE 2012b: www.education.gov.uk/schools/pupilsupport/inclusion 9/11/12)

It is not clear how these measures will benefit the overall quality of provision for the highly able, nor how the impact will be measured, nor the underlying pedagogical rationale.

This research set out to capture the key perceptions of children, teachers, support staff, parents and school leaders about the pressures, if any, on life and learning for pupils with high ability. Although stimulated by professional and teaching experience gained primarily within the selective school sector, the research was nevertheless inclusive in outlook and sought to recommend actions of relevance to all schools. It set out to make recommendations: a) to teachers about possible improvements to pedagogical and pastoral practice; b) to policy-makers in light of recent funding cuts and the apparent absence of a system-wide vision. There was a particular focus on the pressures pupils in particular might have experienced or observed and which appeared to trigger underachievement or emotional difficulties. The work of Peterson (2006), Jackson (1998), Freeman (1990 and 2008), Neihart (1999), Stopper (2000) and Leyden (2010) were key reference points in this respect because of the focus in their work on the social and emotional needs of highly able pupils. Media reports of trends towards increasing instances of self-harm and even suicides at university of extremely high achieving students (see for example Allen 2010) appeared to illustrate the need for a study of risk factors associated with ineffective provision and care for the high able. Equally, concerns about the merits of imminent curriculum reform, for example of GCSE as it evolves into the English Baccalaureate (EBacc), also suggest that such a project aim is timely (BBC News 2011; Watt 2012). As Alison Wolf (2011) has noted, curriculum reform focussed on design at the expense of quality of experience and aspiration has blighted vocational education. Of the necessary requirements for effective reform she states:

Using government-driven qualification design as the main policy and reform instrument in vocational education is a serious

mistake ... Educational reform of the last thirty years is littered with qualification reforms, of which perhaps two have been genuinely successful ... And the two that succeeded [GCSE and BTEC] – were successful because they responded to *a broad and irreversible change in aspirations* ... Micro-management of qualifications destroys the major arguments in favour of awarding bodies' existence - ... their ability and motivation to innovate. (Wolf 2011: 139, emphasis added)

It is hoped that this project will enable the voice of the highly aspirational child (and parent) to be heard at a time when public examinations at 16 and 18 years are undergoing root and branch reform.

In preparing for the design phase of the project, it was necessary to establish the context provided by other relevant research and establish the ontological perspective of the researcher.

1.1.3 Setting the Context

My personal and professional experience as a teacher and Headteacher has shaped both the location of the research and also my ontological position. My professional network consists predominantly of selective schools. The discourse in this sector is focussed on high performance and the question of how to provide best for potential high achievers (Jesson 2008; Power et al. 2003; Sutton Trust 2008). The methodology outlined in the design phase (Chapter 3 below) explores the philosophical position of the research in more depth, but it is important to make clear the ontological frame at the outset. Although selective schools featured prominently in the sampling, no value judgement about the relative merits of different school types was intended. The key consideration was my experience as a teacher and school leader and what emerged from the investigation about best practice in high ability education generally and in selective and non-selective schools alike.

In addition, recent political and economic developments have had an impact on the capacity of maintained schools to support provision outside a core curriculum offer. The National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth (NAGTY) has been disbanded following a critical review by the government (DCSF 2009), as alluded to above. The Young, Gifted and Talented initiative, the successor to NAGTY, which was financed by CfBT and led by a government-appointed National Champion was also abandoned by

the Coalition government in 2010 despite its ambitious aims on being launched ("Vision and Values of Y, G and T" DCSF 2008). Budget cuts (Department for Education 2010) have also forced schools to consider the halting of resourcing of Gifted and Talented programmes because of the priority to achieve all-important floor targets (currently 40% of pupils to 5 A*-C GCSE grades). In addition, Sixth Form funding outside of the core curriculum offer has been stopped with the removal of so-called 'entitlement' funding to provide for enrichment (i.e. form tutoring and extra-curricular activity) at post-16 level (Vaughan and Lee 2010; DfE 2012d). Conversely, the Academies programme offers scope for investment in this area (Bassett, et al. 2012), but it is not clear if converter schools to date have exercised this freedom in support of specialised support for the highly able.

1.2 The research background

One of the most contested aspects of high ability education is that of identification of learners considered gifted or talented in one or more curriculum areas. This partly stems from the changing definitions of terms such as 'gifted and talented' and 'highly able'. Winstanley's etymological analysis (2004) highlights the semantic difficulty of both "gift" and "talent", especially the notion of elitism attached to the term "giftedness". This study agrees with her in accepting the need for linguistic clarity in dissolving negative social and cultural connotations.

Definitions of high ability are nebulous and disparate and discussion is difficult without ...agreed terms of reference. (Winstanley 2004: 9)

It was also important to fix on working definitions in order to establish the population of pupils being researched. This research follows Bailey et al. (2008) and guidelines published successively by the last government (DfES 2006; DCSF 2007; DCSF 2008) in focussing on those pupils "who have one or more abilities developed to a level significantly ahead of their peer group (or with the potential to develop these abilities)" (DfES 2006). To this can be added the official working definition used until recently by OFSTED inspectors:

Gifted: ability or *potential* in one or more academic subjects; the top five to 10% of pupils per school as measured by actual or *potential* achievement ...

Talented: ability or *potential* in one or more skills, whether artistic, sporting, interpersonal or vocational; the top five to 10% of pupils per school as measured by actual or *potential* achievement ... However, one element of the description should be emphasised: it is the top five to 10% of pupils per school, regardless of the overall ability profile of pupils.

Gifted and talented: pupils with one or more abilities developed to a level significantly ahead of their year group (or with the *potential* to develop those abilities)
(OFSTED 2009: Appendix)

The following sections seek to sharpen this definition and account for the fluidity of the terms of reference. This was necessary because of the changing landscape in conceptions of giftedness, as evidenced by the wealth of literature on this issue in the form especially of reviews of contrasting theoretical perspectives, for example , Renzulli (1978 and 1998), Sternberg (2000 and 2005), Balchin et al. (2009), and Heller et al. (2000). Key reviews of relevant research included Buntic (2009), Bailey et al. (2008) and Hewston (2005). A helpful survey of research in the field of high ability and evaluation of a range of methodologies is contained in Ziegler and Raul (2000). A series of journals on high ability and giftedness was also a key source of data about current theory and practice, including the Occasional Papers of NAGTY, the Roeper Review (journal of the Roeper Institute in the Roeper School, Birmingham, Michigan, USA), Gifted Child Quarterly, The Journal of Secondary Gifted Education, High Ability Studies and the Duke Gifted Letter (Duke University Talent Identification Program, North Carolina, USA).

1.2.1 Terminology

At the outset of this project, the term 'gifted and talented' was used interchangeably with 'highly able', 'highly academic' and 'potentially high achieving'. It was decided to focus on a single identifier following the review of the core literature and prior to fieldwork, because of perceived problems with communicating the research parameters to participating schools and articulating the research objects with precision at the analysis and discussion stage. The political and cultural associations of the term 'gifted and talented' with strategic programmes such as NAGTY were considered obstructive. Smithers and Robinson (2012) had the phrase to be a "confusing and catch-all construct" which they recommended to "be abandoned" (op.

cit.: 44). They did so on the basis of their finding that teachers themselves were prone to a “confusion over meaning [and a] reluctance to label” (op. cit.: 15).

Alternative phrasing, such as ‘highly able’, ‘very able’ and ‘highly academic’, suggests that exceptional academic qualities are already manifest and linked with conventional qualifying aptitudes such as the logico-mathematical or linguistic (c.f. Gardner 1993). Qualifiers such as ‘highly’ and ‘very’ are problematic because of their subjectivity and imprecision. A working definition was needed which conveyed a high current working level and/or the potential to achieve highly in the future. In addition, a quantitative definition was arrived at to help sharpen the research focus. The term ‘potential high achiever’ was chosen to describe the pupils about whom the research was undertaken and who participated as interview subjects. This follows the practice of Bailey et al. (2008) in seeking a “functional” definition which “was broader than the traditional conception ... and allowed for a range of abilities ... and potentially a more inclusive framework” (op. cit. 2008: 4). It should be noted that in the sample selection process, ‘current working level’ referred to a pupil’s academic performance and ‘target grade’ to the estimated GCSE grade. (See Table 3.1.) The fieldwork started with a narrower definition based purely on the NAGTY criteria (NAGTY 2006) to enable construction of the sample. It was also noted that researchers in the field of gender and high ability, notably (Francis 2010), had refined their target population by a particular focus on, for example, popularity. In this case, a shorthand for the pupils in question – High Achieving and Popular (HAPs) – had given the project a distinctive new terminology. For similar reasons, it was decided to focus in this research on ‘potential high achievers’ (PHAs), who fulfilled the eligibility criteria set out in the next section but who had yet to attain their predicted academic levels.

1.2.2 Target population

The pupils upon whom the research was centred were aged 13-14 years and in Year 9. This was for two reasons: this is the stage at which pupils make usually their choices for options at GCSE. Secondly, researchers such as Tinson (2009) have found that children “over the age of 11 years are ... in the ‘reflective stage of development (and) ... are typically aware of the views of others and can take these into account when developing their own ... viewpoints” (op. cit.: 5). It is common practice for schools to

discuss with pupils target GCSE grades at this stage and to accelerate the year of entry for public examinations (Noden et al. 2007: 1 and 44-45). In defining the group within this cohort for the fieldwork phase, a GCSE points score of 58 or above in the pupils' best 8 subjects was to be assumed, where A* = 8 points, A = 7 and B = 6 and a total of 58 points = 7 A*s or more (Strand 2006: 37 and see Appendix 23). Variables such as gender and class were not factored into the selection of the sample because of a need to ensure manageability of the data collection and analysis processes within the constraints of time and resources. Discussion of the findings refers in more detail to variables which were found to be worthy of further investigation.

1.3 Wider debates

It is important to establish the background debates about high ability and the theoretical position of this research. The potential bias of the researcher whose professional role is located in a particular sector has been offset by rigorous attention to "maintain objectivity" and *not* "allow personal bias to distort the evidence" (Cohen et al. 2007: 196). Viewed more widely, this research is based on the premise that education designed for high achievers is morally justifiable because of society's obligation to meet the needs of all of its young people (Gross 2000; Montgomery 2009a; Wallace 2010; Winstanley 2010a and 2010b). Secondly, there is an economic need to promote opportunities for the highly able to excel and make a significant contribution to the economy, regardless of their social background (McWilliam and Haukka 2008). This contrasts with some voices in the same debate which appear to argue against specialised resourcing for an elite minority where this promotes the perpetuation of class divisions (Bourdieu 1998; Ball 2003; Power et al. 2003) and any form of selection on the basis of intelligence (White 2006; Jesson 2008). The debate over school organisation for selection is especially controversial (Crook et al. 1999) and has been shaped by seminal works dating from the period of national re-organisation for comprehensivisation (Lacey 1970; Ball 1981).

Conversely, there are those who present evidence supporting specialised provision within schools or school systems differentiated by ability (Eyre 1997; Davies et al. 2009 Wallace et al. 2010). They justify their position on two grounds: a) exposure of an able child to a highly academic curriculum is a more fulfilling educational and

developmental experience for the individual (c.f. Freeman 2008); b) the cultivation of a cohort of highly able young learners is both economically and culturally advantageous for society (c.f. McWilliam and Haukka 2008). More recently this debate has been infused with a resurgence of interest by politicians and commentators on the issue of social mobility – often regarded as the key product of a selective educational system which is blind to socio-economic background, ethnicity or gender (The Sutton Trust 2008). OFSTED itself has called for a focus on high ability provision in order to “promote social mobility through access to a wider range of universities” (OFSTED 2009: 8). Finally, a report on access to the professions by the last Labour government also made claims about the advantages to the economy of a culture which encourages the development of talent:

... This isn't just about individual opportunity, it's about simple economics. We're emerging from the largest global financial crisis ... for almost a century...Now we have to make sure all available talent is used as we support the recovery...There will be new opportunities ... for those with the ... ability to master these complex jobs. The reality is that, as a country, we won't be able to take advantage of those opportunities if people with talent fall by the wayside because they never had the chance or got the encouragement. (McFadden 2010: 2)

This project has sought to uncover the pastoral and pedagogical challenges implicit in providing such encouragement and has sought further indications from pupils and teachers themselves of how it might be improved.

These issues are explored further in the Literature Review (Chapter 2), but it needs to be clear from the outset that the researcher is the Headteacher of a maintained grammar school. There is then the possibility of unintended bias. This is countered at the data analysis stage, for example, by validity checks carried out by colleagues not connected with my school or any other selective school. The achievement and wellbeing of pupils in the target population was paramount.

1.4 Statement of the problem

My professional reflections had centred on the educational experience and wellbeing of high achieving pupils. Initial analysis of the literature suggested that such pupils might be: insightful about different teaching styles and critical in their views (Pomerantz 2002; Warwick 2009; Montgomery 2009a); prone to a negative self-image

and anxiety brought about by under-achievement relative to peers (Campbell, Muijs et al. 2006; Montgomery 2009a); subject to a range of social, domestic and school-related pressures (Claxton 2008; Leyden 2010); especially disadvantaged if situated on the Autistic Spectrum Disorder/Asperger's Syndrome spectrum (Winstanley 2005; Montgomery 2010; Wallace et al. 2010) and susceptible to underachievement or disengagement in the event of a domestic or personal crisis (Jackson 1998; Peterson 2006; Mazzoli 2006a).

This project was undertaken with the aim of producing findings for teachers, parents and educators interested in ensuring that potentially high achieving pupils enjoy their schooling and fulfil their potential as learners and as young people. It was focussed on what each of these pupils becomes as well as what they achieve. It proceeded by placing the voice of the pupils centrally because there was a comparative scarcity of findings from this kind of approach. The problem was trying to understand what pedagogies appeared to the pupils to be the most effective; what pressures they were exposed to and they felt the school dealt with these; what they wanted to get out of being at school and their views on how they would achieve this; and lastly, what in general was most likely to prevent them from achieving their potential.

1.4.1 Defining high achievement

It was considered important, in determining the theoretical basis for the research, to show how contentious the discourse about high achievement can be. The aim in this section is to capture the essence of key conceptualisations. Some commentators regard the current divergence of opinion as evidence of a paradigm shift away from traditionally held views about giftedness (Matthews and Folsom 2009). They point to the increasing influence of findings from the behavioural and neurological sciences to explain the increasing conceptualisation of high achievement and the potential for it as a product of "findings about human development, neural plasticity, psychometrics and the complex interacting processes that underlie exceptional intellectual ability and achievement" (op. cit. 2009: 18). Further, they observe a polarisation of views consisting of, on the one hand, "a traditional categorical perspective" of giftedness known as the "mystery model" (ibid.) and on the other, a "developmental perspective" of giftedness as "mastery" (ibid.). Under the first

definition the ‘mystery’ of giftedness is associated with children who are “special, superior to others in an innate, categorical and global way” (ibid.). Under the other, ‘mastery’ refers to “the dynamic nature of the development of expertise ... and the ongoing process that leads to gifted-level learning” (ibid.). This research builds on a theoretical exploration of both paradigms in Chapter 2.

1.4.2 Measuring potential

It is accepted that ‘potential’ is impossible to quantify because of the complex interplay of conflicting variables such as developmental rates, domestic risk factors (e.g., parental divorce or bereavement), peer-group pressure and other environmental issues affecting the school or the home. Bailey et al. (2008) consider the “capacity of individuals to achieve” to be a more acceptable form of measurement. Such a definition allowed for an inclusive approach to be adopted for this research, especially at the discussion and recommendation stage, where it might legitimately be asked – which pupils and which settings are the findings designed to serve? If it is agreed with Bailey et al. (op. cit.) that high academic potential can be measured in terms of a school’s capacity to increase “pupil participation” in specialised provision, then recommendations emerging from the findings below (Chapter 7) will be of value to all schools regardless of the number of defined gifted and talented pupils on roll. Similarly, the rate and degree to which a pupil achieves value-added in his/her performances in assessed tasks, i.e. the performance above minimum target level and distance travelled from baseline assessment, can also be considered a means of measuring the capacity to achieve highly, even where official gifted and talented eligibility criteria (NAGTY 2006) are not met.

1.5 Pupil wellbeing

Whilst education for high achievement is well researched from the perspective of pupil performance and the risk of underachievement (Eyre 1997; Montgomery 2009b; Wallace et al. 2010), there is a relative lack of material relating to pupil wellbeing with a specific focus on potential high achievers. Notable exceptions include Stopper (2000), Mazzoli (2006a) and Leyden (2010) in the UK and articles from the American Counselling Association (ACA), (e.g. Peterson 2006), and the Roeper Review, (e.g. Jackson 1998) and (Neihart 1999), in the USA. This research viewed potential high

achievers holistically and examined their experience both inside and outside the classroom. This was considered pertinent at a time when the discourse about school improvement is dominated by the issue of teachers' standards (DfE 2012c) and the drive to create "a strong sense of aspiration for all children" (DfE 2010: 5). Schools are prioritising resources towards the achievement of new floor targets (currently 35% A*-C and rising (DfE 2010:70)) and the achievement of the new, government-prescribed English Baccalaureate. The research posed questions aimed at exposing the impact of these conflicting forces on highly able pupils and the risk of their needs being neglected, as suggested in related research (Winstanley 2004, 2010a and 2010b; Montgomery 2009b; Leyden 2010; Wallace et al. 2010).

1.6 The Research Questions

The initial questions which emerged from the reflections and influences outlined above were as follows:

1. How effectively are the needs of potentially high achieving pupils of secondary age being met?
2. What experiences have an impact on their wellbeing? If so, what are these and how can they be addressed?
3. What other factors can impact on their wellbeing? (For example, parental expectation.)
4. What do teachers need to know in order to maximize the wellbeing of high achieving pupils and minimise the impact of negative risk factors?

These questions were further shaped by the reading which formed the basis of the literature review (Chapter 2) when detailed analysis took place of closely related research, core texts and underlying philosophical perspectives.

1.7 Aims of the project

The purpose of this research was to make a contribution to the field of knowledge relating to the teaching, learning and care of high achieving middle years' pupils. It was anticipated that the understanding of professionals would be enhanced and suggestions for improved leadership practice emerge. Schools might have a

predominance of high achieving pupils, but have concerns about their performance and wellbeing (Jackson 1998; Gross 2006; Seldon 2010). They might have concerns about particular subsets or even individual pupils who are clearly potential high achievers, but who are generally considered vulnerable (Peterson 2006; Mazzoli 2006a; Freeman 2008). Thus the research has explored the following areas:

- The nature of factors impeding enjoyment and fulfilment at school amongst high achieving pupils of secondary age;
- What teachers need to know and do inside and outside the classroom to respond effectively to the demands of high achievers;
- The role of school leaders and middle managers in ensuring that an environment is created which nurtures high achievement, but does not diminish wellbeing.

Findings are for dissemination amongst practitioners, but may also be of relevance to policymakers involved in particular in curriculum design in light of the present government's White Paper *The Importance of Teaching* (DfE 2010). Parents may also be interested to learn of the views of pupils and other parents for guidance and reassurance.

1.8 Structure and Organisation

The outline structure of the project consists of a preliminary evaluation of the researcher's professional experience and clarification of potential bias. An overview has been given of the competing theoretical positions in relation to high ability education. The orientation of these can be summarised as: a) pedagogical (i.e. concerned with teaching and learning practice); b) psychological and behavioural (i.e. concerned with pupils' social and emotional wellbeing; c) cultural (i.e. concerned with inclusion, selection and social mobility and the corresponding ethos in the school, family or peer-group). The structure of the project itself is illustrated in Table 1.1 below.

The next stage in the research is to survey the relevant literature in Chapter 2 in further depth in order to shape and define the research questions. In Chapter 3 the data

Table 1.1 Research structure and organisation of thesis

Chapter	Process	Aim
1	Reflection on professional experience	Prepare the ground for research proposal and positioning
	Scoping of generic texts	Alignment of professional experience with research interest
	Initial formulation of RQs	Focus project
2	Survey of Literature	Grounding of data collection
	Final formulation of RQs	Focus data collection
3	Review of Design and Methods	Construct empirical study
	Selection of Method	Facilitate fieldwork
4	Study One data collection	Pilot methods and collect first batch data
	Evaluation of Study One Data	Modify data collection tool
5	Study Two data collection	Final batch of data
	Analysis of Study Two Data	Organise and findings
6	Discussion of findings	In-depth interpretation
7	Conclusions and Recommendations	Respond to RQs and evaluate contribution to professional knowledge
Bibliography	EndNote resource – systematic compilation from citations	
Appendices	Supporting illustrative material	Elucidate Literature Review and data collection processes

collection method is described along with the methodological theory of the empirical work, for further refinement at the design and evaluation stages. A preliminary study is described and evaluated in Chapter 4 to quality assure the approach to data collection and analyse initial findings. Chapter 5 contains an analysis and interpretation of the main study findings to prepare for further discussion in Chapter 6. Discussion at this stage incorporates an evaluation of the key findings in relation both to pupils, teachers and parents, practice in the classroom, school leadership and organisation and

the wider political and economic context. Chapter 7 concludes with recommendations for improved practice in these spheres, based on the outcomes of the investigation.

Chapter 2 – Review of the Literature

2.1 Introduction

The 'tall poppy' metaphor of the title of this project is intended to suggest the beauty and the vulnerability of the outstanding achiever. It is intended to provide an image which evokes the object of this investigation, echoing Janesick (1998) in her use of dance as a metaphor for the qualitative research process. She advocated metaphor as a means to "explain and make understandable the familiar in a contextual, personal and passionate way" (op. cit.: 52). Similarly, the poppy metaphor is designed to bring to our attention a thing of beauty which is perhaps taken for granted, grows randomly and is vulnerable to the elements.

The purpose of this chapter is to place the research into its historical and theoretical context. This has involved identifying the key works of scholarship and policy developments which have shaped current practice in education for high achievement. The history of research and practice in this area is long and at times contentious. This chapter seeks to capture the conceptual shifts which have occurred since Galton's foundational work *Hereditary Genius* (1865) and to account for the contested nature of these ideas. It is also intended to focus on the immediate stimulus for this project, namely the wellbeing and nurture of potentially high achieving pupils. There is good cause to be concerned at the state of provision for such young people in the today, in the UK especially, given the country's lowly international standings according to PISA rankings (25th - OECD 2010: 8), UN child wellbeing data (21st - UNICEF 2007: 2) and the disarray in gifted education reported upon recently by the Sutton Trust (Smithers and Robinson 2012).

2.2. Structure of the analysis of the related literature

It is important to establish the seminal texts in the field of high ability education and the related concept paradigms at the outset. Research into high intelligence is often located in the field of psychology (see Table 2.1 below), but within this a wide range of theoretical reference points can be identified. These are cited and discussed in this review and areas which are under-researched have also been highlighted. The key works which characterise the research terrain include Heller et al. (2000), Sternberg

(2005) and Balchin (2009). The detailed analytical summaries to be found in Brody (2000) and Tannenbaum (2000) have also provided a key resource. Previous research on pedagogy and giftedness is summarised in Hewston et al. (2005) and the ERIC Digest (ERIC 1990). A study of the relative frequency of the range of research methods is found in Ziegler and Raul (2000). Because of the conceptual divide in approaches to high intelligence and education, the discussion has been divided into two sections related to the key competing paradigms: Part 1 - cognitive and behavioural constructs; Part 2 - social, emotional and cultural constructs. The notion that studies of giftedness and the pedagogy associated with it have been shaped by sometimes conflicting paradigms is influenced by Kuhn's account of similar phenomena in the evolution of knowledge in the natural sciences (Kuhn 1996).

Foundational works in addition to Galton (1865) which are central Part One of the review include: Terman (1916), Binet and Simon (1905), Burt (1909-10) and Thurstone (1936) on psychometrics and the measurement of intelligence. These works subscribed to a conceptualisation of intelligence as fixed and inherited. They are largely confined to the first half of the twentieth century, although there are outliers such as Herrnstein (1994) who contended that intelligence is a determinant of social success and a product of genetic inheritance. These studies were test-orientated and diagnostic in nature (c.f. especially Binet and Simon: 1905).

A second paradigm appears to inform the work of Hollingworth (1926; 1942) and successors however, who viewed the gifted holistically and postulated a 'nurture' model which has influenced many commentators since the 1950s. These include Bloom (1956) and Gardner (1983) on the nurture of cognitive capability and the domains of intelligence. Renzulli (1978) and Sternberg (1984) also sought to conceptualise high intelligence, but combined this approach with a focus on forms of educational provision for the gifted. These are considered below together with the 'English Model' of Gifted and Talented Education (Campbell, Eyre et al. 2004) and other studies focussed on *provision* for high ability to ensure focus on the situation in the UK. More fluid conceptualisations of intelligence which drive 'learning to learn' programmes are also included (Wallace 1993 and 2004; Winstanley 2004 and 2010b), with a final

Table 2.1 Theories within the paradigm of intelligence based on Galton's (1865) conceptualisation, after Smithers and Robinson (2012)

Key Text/Author/Date	Research Domain	Theoretical contribution	Basic premise
'Hereditary Intelligence' (Galton 1865)	Cognitive Psychology/ Darwinian Biology/ Eugenics	Psychometric Testing	Intelligence as fixed and inherited
'General Intelligence objectively determined' (Spearman 1904)	Experimental Psychology/ Maths-Statistics	Calculation of g factor for measurement of 'genius'	Intelligence a fixed and measurable
Binet-Simon Intelligence Test (Binet 1905)	Psychology/ Psychometrics	Scale of Human Intelligence	Assessment of a range of cognitive skills to calculate intellectual ability
'Experimental test of general intelligence' (Burt 1909-10)	Educational Psychology	Application of testing to schoolchildren and Restatement of view of intelligence as innate	Outcomes of intelligence testing can be deployed to determine nature of schooling
'Measurement of Intelligence', 'Genetic Studies of Genius' (Terman 1916, 1926)	Educational Psychology	Promotion of Stanford-Binet IQ testing	Giftedness a product of 'nurture'
'A new concept of intelligence and a new method of measuring primary abilities' (Thurstone 1936)	Psychometrics and Statistics	Posits seven primary mental abilities	Intelligence as multi-faceted
'Taxonomy of Educational Objectives' (Bloom 1956)	Educational Psychology	Posits hierarchy of cognitive and affective capabilities	Prototype 'mastery' model of intelligence
'The Nature of Human Intelligence' (Guilford 1967)	Psychology/ Psychometrics	Posits non-hierarchical model of intelligence	Intelligence can be measured by a taxonomy of cognition, memory, divergent/convergent production and evaluation
'Frames of Mind' (Gardner 1983)	Developmental Psychology	Theory of Multiple Intelligences	Seven domains of intelligence
'Toward a Triarchic Theory of Human Intelligence' (Sternberg 1984)	Psychology/ Psychometrics	Triarchic Theory	Interplay of higher order intellectual processes
'The Bell Curve' (Herrnstein 1994)	Experimental Psychology	Intelligence influenced by inherited and environmental factors	Posits a correlation between intelligence and social status, including the notion of a cognitive elite

reflection on high ability education as a morally justifiable need (Warnock 2005; Winstanley 2010b) or “capability” issue (Saito 2003).

Table 2.1 above sets out an etymological analysis of paradigms in the conceptualisation of intelligence and giftedness from the era of Galton (1865). Table 2.2 (page 44 below) sets out key works since Hollingworth’s seminal work (1926; 1942) and Renzulli’s (1978) definition of giftedness. The tables are designed to capture the essence of the competing paradigms.

2.3 Part One: Cognitive and behavioural theories about high achievement

2.3.1 Hereditability and psychometric testing

Early theorists in the field were preoccupied with the measurement and testing of intelligence, as illustrated in the psychometric studies produced by Francis Galton (1865), Alfred Binet (1899), Cyril Burt (1909-10)) and Louis Terman (1916). With echoes of Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species* (1859), the conception of giftedness developed by Galton was that it was fixed, innate and hereditary. Although all were concerned with measuring intelligence quantitatively, there are significant conceptual differences of approach. Galton’s focus was on the make-up and distribution of genius judged by performance in “relatively simple cognitive functions”, such as reaction times (Brody 2000: 16). Binet also sought to measure intelligence, but by means of studying “complex mental processes” (op. cit.: 17) through a range of diagnostic tests aimed at all abilities, including the blind (Binet and Simon 1905), and incorporating “aesthetic judgements” (Brody 2000: 17). A further illustration of the research interest in measuring intelligence was the publication by Spearman of a theory which appeared to give Binet’s new tests a theoretical foundation (Spearman 1904). He had calculated a factor *g* from a matrix of “indices of intellectual ability” (Brody 2000: 18). Terman could therefore define the gifted quantitatively as “the top 1% level in general intellectual ability, as measured by the Stanford-Binet Scale or a comparable instrument” (Terman et al., *Genetic Studies of Genius*, 1926: 43 in Renzulli 1978: 180).

There are three legacies of the measurement theories from this period: a) variants of the Binet-Simon/Stanford-Binet intelligence (IQ) test are still in use today (including in 11+ grammar school selection in England) following modifications by Terman (c.f. Terman 1916; White 2006); b) giftedness is associated with high level

academic capability, at the expense of other possible manifestations of *g* (Stobart 2008: 57ff); c) the notion of intelligence testing is controversial because of the associations, dating back to Galton, with eugenics and a “genetic hierarchy of ability” (Brody 2000: 30):

We know how to measure something called intelligence, but we do not know what has been measured. We do know that whatever has been measured is predictive of performance in academic settings. And, we know that what we have measured is influenced by a person’s genes. We do not know what, if anything, should be done with this knowledge. (Brody 2000: 30-31)

Later commentators, such as White (2006), have been more critical of the influence of early proponents of psychometric methods of measurement. They believe these methods have shaped our secondary schooling system in favour of intellectual achievement as opposed to the practical or vocational. White is particularly scathing about the intellectual link between Cyril Burt, a key architect of the post-1944 selective education system, and Galton: “for both writers the elite came first” (White 2006: 22). They shared a view of intelligence as “innate” and “limited” and therefore suited to an ideology founded on selective education. The polarising effect of the testing and measurement debate is of key relevance to this project because of its focus on pupils who are deemed to have the capacity to excel intellectually. It shows that concepts of intelligence can have far-reaching consequences for the individual, in determining their schooling, and for society as a whole in shaping its attitude to those who appear to have the capacity to achieve highly.

2.3.2 The reification of intelligence and Bloom’s taxonomy

The effect of the early to mid-twentieth century conceptualisation of intellectual ability as *g* was to reify intelligence. As Stobart (2008) has noted, this process caused an intellectual quality to become a “biological entity” (op. cit. 2008: 30). Thurstone (1936) had identified “primary mental abilities”, such as the verbal and spatial, and implicitly moved the discourse on away from one-dimensional constructions of intelligence as *g*. Bloom’s (1956 and see Appendix 1) construction of a taxonomy of educational outcomes was also a significant step towards reversing this process as it postulated

constituents of intelligence, which could be cultivated by particular teaching methods. Whilst there remains some controversy about his hierarchical approach (Stobart 2008: 106), Bloom's identification of cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of intelligence enabled educators to consider how best to address different aspects of a child's intelligence. It also prepared the ground for the paradigmatic shift towards a conception of intelligence as a product of education rather than a prerequisite for it.

Tannenbaum (2000) in his historical analysis of the place of Gardner's (1983) theory of multiple intelligences captures the distinction between these and the Galtonian system. What should be assessed he argues is the: "specialised talents that demonstrate extraordinary rates of mastery and of creativity" (Tannenbaum 2000: 43). The dichotomy between these two positions is captured by Van Tassel-Baska (2005) who asserts that there are underlying assumptions which have the power to shape teaching strategies and even whole school organisation. Following Gardner's identification of the domains of intelligence, she claims:

Whether we ascribe to a view of 'g-factor' intelligence ... or a more domain-specific orientation to intelligence ... it affects our conception of giftedness in important ways that in turn affect our ways of interpreting it in schools for identification and programming purposes and in life for purposes of college and career planning.
(Van Tassel-Baska 2005: 358)

The aptitudes assumed by Gardner included the linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, kinaesthetic, musical, interpersonal and intrapersonal. Two further intelligences – the naturalist and the existential – were postulated, but remain more tentative. According to Feldhusen (2005) this identification of domains meant that practitioners were no longer reliant on narrow, Galtonian intellectual measures, as epitomised by Stanford-Binet intelligence testing, but rather on the nurture and development of special abilities.

If the identification process moves beyond the traditional model of based on intelligence ... (it) may become more informal, be based on observation of performance and become a more long-term process.
(Feldhusen 2005: 68)

A further key contribution was the conceptualisation of intelligence as developmental, rather than fixed and inherited, and manifested by the creativity identified by Bloom

(1956) at the apex of his taxonomy. This made it possible for the function of schooling to focus on the nurture of special abilities by integrating creativity into the curriculum.

2.3.3 Intelligence, giftedness and schooling

Of the programmes for high ability education recognised today to be making a lasting impact, the National Research Centre for Gifted and Talented Youth founded by Joseph Renzulli at the University of Connecticut in 1990 has the highest profile. The fact that it is founded on a non-reified conceptualisation of intelligence may in part explain its durability. These are characterised both by Renzulli's "three-ring" conception of giftedness (1978; 2005 and see Appendix 3 below) and Sternberg's triarchic theory of intelligence (Sternberg 1984; Feldhusen 2005). The former postulated a curriculum model for potential high achievers designed for pupils located at the interface between above average general ability, high levels of task commitment and creativity. This model was visualised as a Venn diagram consisting three overlapping "rings" (Renzulli 1978: 182; 2000: 371 and see Appendix 3). This was operationalised as the Enrichment Triad Model and formed the basis of the curriculum model propagated by the National Research Centre – the Schoolwide Enrichment Model. The three types of enrichment for gifted pupils theorised by Renzulli can be summarised as follows: a) (Type I) the exposure to "a wide variety of disciplines, topics ... hobbies" (Renzulli 2000: 370); b) (Type II) the promotion of "thinking and feeling processes ... such as critical thinking communication skills" (ibid.); c) (Type III) the cultivation of interest in a "self-selected area" to develop creativity, task commitment and "self-directed learning skills" (ibid. : 370-1). Renzulli also supported acceleration of learning by "curriculum compacting" – a means of avoiding repetition of previously covered subject content and bringing forward access to higher learning (ibid. : 378-80). Whilst there is clearly a conceptual framework at play in Renzulli's theory, it does not prescribe quasi-Aristotelian categories or hierarchies of intelligence as the basis for classroom practice and so a more fluid notion of ability emerged which took account of behavioural and environmental factors..

Sternberg's theory was also put into practice at the National Research Centre and consisted of three perceived components of intelligence: firstly, "higher order executive processes such as planning, monitoring and evaluation"; secondly, execution

and evaluation of tasks; thirdly, knowledge acquisition and problem-solving” (Sternberg 1984; Feldhusen 2005: 67 and see Appendix 4 below). Conceptually, this is closely related to Renzulli because of the shared focus on cognitive process, creativity and talent development. Crucially also these theories were proven to be capable of operationalisation in school settings and compatible with an inclusive ethos. As Renzulli himself notes of his Schoolwide Enrichment Model:

SEM can be implemented in a wide variety of settings and used with various populations of students including high ability students with learning disabilities and high ability students who underachieve in school. (Renzulli 2000: 381)

This illustrates a fundamentally different perspective from the narrowly selective method of the Galtonian tradition. Its success, other than the attractions of the programme itself, may also be attributed to sponsorship by central government and the conception of giftedness which underpinned the project. The outcome of any political inconsistency tends to be unevenness of provision, characterised by Tannenbaum (op. cit.: 44) as a problem of the “fundamental difference between *programs* and *provisions*” (op. cit.: 43 emphasis added). The former tend to become embedded whilst the latter can decline into a sort of “add-on ... that sooner or later disappeared because of lack of strong enough commitment or sufficient funds” (ibid.).

There have been many such models of programmes tailored for gifted children, but few have been active for as long or as effectively. Tannenbaum (2000) reports on findings from surveys of provision for high achievement carried out in 1954 and 1985 respectively in the US, in which it was found that: “of the 100 schools contacted ... in every case the original programmes (for the gifted) were no longer in operation” (Tannenbaum 2000: 43). Some form of political sponsorship and a well-researched, but expansive ethos appear also to be vital. Gagné (2009) for example has proposed a Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent (DGMT - see Appendix 6). Despite the coherence of its underlying philosophy and its inclusive ethos, it seems unlikely to impact on practice in his home country in a way that ensures it becomes embedded.

Gifted education in Quebec does not officially exist. No law puts pressure on school boards. Not a single professional supervises that area, neither in the Education Ministry nor in school boards.... And

to top it all, the teachers' union ferociously attacks anything they perceive as 'elitism'. (Gagné 2009: 41)

The relevance of this observation is to point up the risk to the personal development of potential high achievers when political and economic factors render obsolete or unaffordable sophisticated curriculum models tailored to the needs of gifted children. It is possible to discern in the recent history of gifted and talented education in the England similar levels of unevenness of resourcing and political backing, quite possibly at the expense of the wellbeing and performance of gifted and talented pupils and consequently the country's economic capacity (McWilliam and Haukka 2008; OECD 2010; Smithers and Robinson 2012).

2.3.3 The 'English Model' of Gifted and Talented Education

Although there are organisations which support the education of highly able pupils in UK schools (e.g. National Association for Able Children in Education (NACE), Scottish Network for Able (SNAP)), this section examines the failure of the only programme comparable to the National Research Centre in the US, the English Model promoted by NAGTY (Campbell 2004).

In America, drivers of research and practice in the field of high ability education were political. They included the Great Talent Hunt to ensure competitiveness during the 'space race' with the Soviet Union in the 1960s and the focus on the Disaffected Youth by the Johnson administration (Tannenbaum 2000). When provision for high ability education in this country has been politically motivated it has likewise encountered ideological and resource difficulties. In 1997 the Labour Government published its White Paper *Excellence in Schools* (DfEE 1997) which provided for "a Gifted and Talented programme, to provide extra support for 5-10 per cent of pupils in each school" (Machin et al. 2007: Executive Summary, page 2) by means of its Excellence in Cities programme (EiC). Research conducted by the London School of Economics highlighted some of these difficulties, even before the terminal effects of economic recession and election defeat for Labour in 2010:

It is quite clear ... that an increase in resources can lead to improvement in the performance of pupils in some of the most disadvantaged schools in the country. Perhaps what may seem disappointing, from a policy perspective is that the benefit is almost

entirely concentrated among the higher ability pupils. Thus, the recurring theme that success builds on success ... is seen again here. (Machin et al. 2007: 21)

The attempt to build on the early success of EiC encouraged the government to support the launch of NAGTY following publication of the 2001 Green Paper, *Schools Achieving Success* (DfES 2001):

We will establish a new Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth to support and challenge gifted and talented pupils. ... Through a research and evaluation arm, it will identify, develop, adopt and disseminate best practice. (DfES 2001: 21)

The English Model Campbell (2004) describes is a summation of work in progress at the time on the integration of provision for highly academic pupils into a personalised offer to all pupils, parallel to developments in the delivery of health and other public services at the time. It is characterised by Campbell (op. cit.) as consisting of a “long trend ... of low expectations at the classroom and school level” (op. cit.: 2). It was founded, like EiC, on an inclusive philosophy, described as “a modernised theory of multiple intelligences, rather than a generic model reflected in a single measured intelligence quotient” (op.cit.: 6). Indeed, it is explicit in citing Renzulli in its defence of the adoption of a “broad conception of ability” (ibid.) so that it could: “include not only cognitive ability, but also ‘creativity’ and ‘talent’ in dance, drama, music and sport and *more controversially* ... task effort and motivation” (ibid. emphasis added). The ‘English Model’ was fundamentally different from the American in that: it was “embedded in the national system”; it was to form a strand in the programme for initial teacher training; it was to resource the appointment in schools of a Gifted and Talented Coordinator. Even at the time logistical difficulties were perceived:

These levers are relatively weak ... when set against a professional culture which has been antagonistic or indifferent. (Campbell 2004: 7)

The stance of the Model as a whole is best captured by a review of the parameters it set itself, namely “Integration ... High quality basic system ... Diversity of provision ... Equality, social justice, meritocracy ... A global perspective” (op. cit.: 4-

6). From a semantic viewpoint it has the air of an apology, rather than a manifesto for change in provision for high achievers. It is ironic that the organisation responsible for formulating the Model on behalf of the government has now itself been wound down (Baker 2010). A Report by DCSF (DCSF 2009) was highly critical of aspects of the work of the National Academy itself, citing “relations (which) were clearly affected” by issues with the outsourcing of services and the nature of key performance indicators and what sounds like a breakdown of communications between the two bodies:

Whilst we emphatically would not say that NAGTY was set up to fail, we would say that the position that NAGTY found itself in mid-way through its five year contract made failure ... almost inevitable.
(DCSF 2009: 41-2)

More fundamentally, it can be argued that NAGTY’s demise was due to a failure to resolve the conceptual tension between the psychometric measurement of giftedness associated with the Galtonian paradigm and the pupil-focussed, inclusive provision associated with post-Hollingworth approaches. The identification criteria integral to the NAGTY approach were controversial because they encouraged compliance with *diktat* rather than engagement with the underlying philosophy:

Although [schools] complied with basic expectations and requirements, for example, to identify such pupils and keep a register, developing provision was not a priority. These schools did not sufficiently recognise their own responsibilities to meet the needs of their gifted and talented pupils. Engagement with parents was inconsistent. Many teachers were not convinced about the importance of making differentiated provision for these pupils ... because they thought it would be at the expense of other pupils ... Very few schools had accessed ... the Learner Academy [i.e. NAGTY] Gifted and talented pupils felt challenged in only some of their lessons because day-to-day lesson planning did not always reflect their needs. For many of the pupils, being identified as gifted and talented meant additional work and extra activities rather than an appropriate level of challenge within lessons, and their views were not adequately sought and listened to by their school. (OFSTED 2009: 4-5)

This critique provided much of the stimulus for the current research.

2.4 Summary

The first part of this review has outlined the course of the paradigm shift which has occurred in research and practice in high ability education. It began with an account of the first paradigm emphasis on psychometrics and the conceptualisation of high intelligence as fixed and inherited. It proceeded to show how later theorists, such as Binet and Simon (1905) and Thurstone (1936) successively reformed Galton's (1865) model. This part of the review has also shown how Hollingworth's (1926) holistic studies brought about a radical re-conceptualisation of intelligence as partially innate but, critically, shaped also by the environment and behavioural traits. This apparent shift in the paradigm enabled more sophisticated accounts of intelligence and high ability to emerge, such as Bloom (1956) and thence Renzulli (1978) and Sternberg (1984). It also led to the formulation of a pedagogy focussed on the *cultivation* and *nurture* of high achievement, such as Renzulli's Schoolwide Enrichment Model (SEM). Locating the key modern research contributions within either paradigm is subjective and therefore problematic. Intelligence is almost always conceptualised as having an innate quality, but the degree to which it is considered malleable and capable of cultivation varies. Comparatively recent accounts, such as Herrnstein (1994) for example, have reverted to the notion of hereditability. This contrasts with other accounts since the war which have rejected this notion in favour of more expansive and flexible understandings.

This section has concluded with an account of the failure of schoolwide provision in the England (Campbell 2004; DCSF 2009), emphasising the contrasting rationales and outcomes of the US and UK models. The ambition of the government in the UK in attempting to embed gifted education across a national system is not to be underestimated. Its failure however can be attributed to a failure of political will, resources and, by contrast with Renzulli's SEM, a pupil-centred philosophy based on a holistic conception of the potential high achiever. According to the DCSF, the National Academy at the time of its demise was most effective at its "core focus ... (of) providing opportunities for out of school learning for gifted and talented children and keeping the profile of the gifted and talented and their needs in the minds of Ministers" (DCSF 2009: 41). The next section seeks to establish whether a suitable philosophy exists and

whether there is scope for this to be operationalised in an environment where the absence of political consensus and financial resources are still critical issues.

2.5 Part Two: Pedagogy and wellbeing in education for high achievement

2.5.1 Introduction

This section takes account of more recent conceptualisations of education for high achievement and examines the implications of these for practitioners and policymakers. Within the holistic paradigm which, it is argued, evolved from the work of Hollingworth, a number of key theoretical contributions have been identified and are illustrated in Table 2.2 overleaf. Key to an understanding of these perspectives is the developmental model captured by Matthews and Folsom's (2009) notion of a "mastery" model of giftedness. Their premise that highly able children have "exceptionally advanced learning needs that require a more flexibly responsive educational attention" (op. cit. 2009: 17) is examined in more depth and considered here to be the logical consequence of Hollingworth's (1926 and 1942) seminal work. This section deals with the practical implications of such an understanding. As Matthews and Folsom observe:

From a mastery perspective... - where giftedness is defined less categorically and more developmentally – looking to provide an appropriate educational fit is an ongoing process, flexibly responsive to changing circumstances and developmental needs, and a natural part of a child's education.
(Matthews and Folsom 2009: 19)

This developmental approach characterises the work of those commentators not aligned with the measurement paradigm and more engaged in the nurture of highly able pupils in the round. Renzulli's (1978; 2005) tripartite conceptualisation of giftedness and the work of Eyre (1997) on the risk to the longer term performance and emotional wellbeing of able children in inclusive settings in the UK are foundational to this part of the review, given its focus on schoolwide practice. An analysis of strategies such as Wallace's TASC¹ (Wallace 1993, 2004, 2010) and Winstanley's Equality of Challenge (Winstanley 2004, 2010a, 2010b) is also undertaken below because of their emphasis on in-class practice rather than extra-curricular programming. The dominant

¹Thinking Actively in a Social Context

Table 2.2 Theories within the paradigm of giftedness based on Hollingworth's (1942) holistic conceptualisation, after Smithers and Robinson (2012)

Key Text/Date	Author/ Research Domain	Theoretical contribution	Basic premise
'Gifted Children: their Nature and Nurture' and 'Children above IQ 180' (Hollingworth 1926 and 1942)	Educational Psychology	Differentiated provision and emotional support, at 180+ IQ	Holistic approach
'Motivation and Personality' (Maslow 1954)	Behavioural Psychology	Hierarchy of Human Needs	Identification of self-actualisation as a high level need
'The Marland Report ' (Marland 1972)	Socio-political commentary/ US Govt. Policy	The Marland Definition	Children capable of high achievement require a differentiated educational programme, regardless of social background
'Mind and Society' (Vygotsky 1978)	Psychology/ Social Constructivism	Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)	Cognitive development through social interaction with peer or teacher
'What makes giftedness?' (Renzulli 1978)	Educational Psychology	Schoolwide Enrichment and the Three-Ring Conception	Interplay of high ability, high creativity, high task commitment
'Gifted Children Growing Up' (Freeman 1990)	Educational Psychology	Emotional development of the gifted	Special emotional challenges of the gifted
'Able Children in Ordinary Schools' (Eyre 1997)	Education/ Policy and Leadership	Adapting mainstream schooling for gifted and talented provision	Extension strategies key to avoiding disengagement
'My Convictions About the Nature of Gifts, Talents and Abilities' (Gagné 1999)	Psychology	Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent	Gifts occur naturally – from these talents develop
'Too Clever by Half' (Winstanley 2004)	Education/ SEN	Equality of Challenge	Ensuring equality of quality of learning for all pupils
'Mindset' (Dweck 2006)	Developmental Psychology	Fixed vs. Growth Mindsets	Mastery/nurture model
'Thinking Actively in a Social Context' (TASC) (Wallace 1993 and 2004)	Education – Advisory and Consultancy	Metacognition	Reflection and self-regulation considered and essential component of intelligent behaviour
'Making connections: cognition, emotion and a shifting paradigm' (Matthews and Folsom 2009)	Educational Psychology (SEN/Talent Identification)	'Mastery' versus 'Mystery' model of giftedness	Strategies for supporting giftedness should be applied according to developmental need, not as a response to quantitative measures

theoretical reference point here is Vygotsky (1978) and his notion of the 'Zone of Proximal Development' as a means of stimulating challenge for all pupils regardless of their innate cognitive capabilities.

The conceptual history of holistic approaches to high ability education can be traced back to Hollingworth (1926; 1942) and her work on to the education of gifted children. Other studies which have focussed on the emotional needs of potential high achievers rather than their intellectual prowess are alluded to below, including Gross (2000), Colangelo and Assouline (2000), Neihart (1999), Freeman (2008), Jackson (1998) and Peterson (2006). The seminal theoretical construct in this regard is Maslow's Hierarchy (Maslow 1954). Concluding sections below focus on the work of Dweck (2006) on 'fixed' and 'growth' mindsets and future thinking about the conceptualisation of giftedness as a need or capability issue. Conceptually, the view of Dweck in this area is fundamental - artificial binary constructs about the nature of high academic potential are best avoided:

... It's not either - or. It's not nature or nurture, genes or environment. From conception on, there's a constant give and take between the two. (Dweck 2006: 5)

Just as a purely Galtonian conception of high intelligence can be rightly challenged, so the view that it is the product solely of a positive psychological and emotional engagement with a given academic pursuit is also considered questionable.

2.5.2 Holistic approaches and the needs of high achieving pupils

The social and emotional needs of potentially high achieving children were first given serious consideration by Leta Hollingworth (1926; 1942) in the inter-war years in her long term studies of children in New York. The prevailing identification tool at the time was the Stanford-Binet test, on which basis her case study children were selected at an IQ of 180. According to Colangelo and Assouline (2000) she found that the "regular school environment did not meet the educational needs of the gifted" (op. cit.: 596). In particular she found that there was "often a gap between a gifted student's intellectual and emotional development" (ibid.). According to Gross (2000) her

proposed solution to this problem of what has become known as ‘asynchronous’ development (c.f. Jackson 1998) was as follows:

Hollingworth argued that to ensure the optimisation of their academic potential, as well as healthy adjustment, extremely gifted children should be placed in full time grouping with intellectual peers. (Gross 2000: 180)

Whilst the selection process was rooted in the quantitative paradigm of Galton, her focus on the health and emotional development was innovative. Her concern was for the pupil in the round and as a person and this in turn led to a preoccupation with the nurture of gifted children.

In similar fashion, Bloom researched the influence and characteristics of the families of high achieving young adults in his investigations now known as the Chicago Studies. This was another example of a shift of focus away from cognitive capability purely towards the environment of the individual. The essence of Bloom’s findings are captured in Howe’s (1990) conclusion, thus:

Whatever the particular area of expertise, the child’s early interest in it came about as a fairly predictable consequence of living in the particular cultural milieu of that individual’s everyday life. (Howe 1990: 104)

Bloom had adopted a purely qualitative approach based on interviews with the “young people themselves and ... their parents ... and their teachers” (Howe 1990: 103), thus giving a voice to the participants. For example, the mother of a young pianist said, “... it’s pretty hard just to sit down and practise without someone there beside you” (Sloane, p85, reported in Howe 1990: 104). The quality of the relationship between parent and child in the context of gifted education is reprised by Dweck (2006) who points out the efficacy of carefully chosen, honest words of appraisal and encouragement to the gifted child, and equally at pains to demonstrate the negative impact of mishandled parent/teacher-child dialogue: “Every word and action can send a message. It tells children ... how to think about themselves.” (ibid.: 173)

2.5.3 Emotional intelligence and the wellbeing of high achievers

It is sometimes argued that gifted children are more at risk of emotional or behavioural disturbance (Mazzoli 2006a; Freeman 2008) than others. When there was

centrally supported resourcing for gifted and talented education (NAGTY) there was a credible research focus on the wellbeing of such students. Mazzoli for example in her study of the issues in “psychosocial adjustment” posed the question, “What’s so different about Gifted and Talented students?” (Mazzoli 2006a). She did so in light of the debate about whether or not such young people are more exposed to risk of emotional difficulty than others. On balance, she finds that this is not the case but that it behoves parents and teachers to be alert to the increasing pressures exerted upon them by a society not entirely sympathetic to their needs, interests and achievements. A key aspect of Mazzoli’s research was the impulse to engage with students themselves. Although self-selecting in a sense – they had been selected for the NAGTY enrichment programme – they had a voice in the dialogue between themselves as individuals and the school/programme coordinators about the advantages and disadvantages of being labelled gifted and talented.

Students are exercised about how they are treated as a result of being labelled, with many stating that although they are proud of the recognition, they find that they do not want it to be public knowledge at school because the stereotype of the gifted ‘nerd’ is still very much alive. (Mazzoli 2006a: 10)

Equally noteworthy was the suggestion about research directions in the future.

There are a number of ... areas of vulnerability that gifted and talented students could be exposed to. Isolation and loneliness, ... which are precursors to depression and anxiety disorders; sensitivity can contribute to anxiety and interpersonal problems; and pressure to succeed whether driven by home or school can result in a fear of failure, anxiety or perfectionist behaviour. Where perfectionist behaviour is present, either as a result of the child’s personality or if resulting from external high pressure and expectation, this can lead to eating disorders, depression and suicide... (Mazzoli 2006a: 11)

Mazzoli did not suggest that highly able pupils were more likely to experience vulnerability, but that teachers and parents must be alert to the possibility, even when conventional indicators of successful performance such as positive grades and school reports, are evident.

The motivation to examine the wellbeing of gifted students appears stronger in the USA as evidenced by the recognised publication history of academic research in this field, as outlined in Chapter 1 above. The Roeper Review in particular has carried regular updates and guidance on this area throughout the last two decades. Jackson's (1998) study of depression in gifted adolescents is exemplary. Her findings do not accord with Mazzoli's view that risk levels are minimal:

Results indicate(d) clearly that self-awareness for the gifted adolescent and for his/her parents are essential to insure optimum functioning and development. The CRs [participants] ... all spoke of the need for a safe place to express themselves. CR9's description of his retreat to the chapel during melancholic periods serves as a metaphor for this deepest of human needs... The chapel is like a safe container where something greater occurs and all is peaceful. It was a bay, a little haven. All of the gifted adolescents in this study sought such a haven: a place to be, to express the deepest sense of self, to be reflected without judgment. (Jackson 1998: 220)

A key finding from this research was the call for a "developmental counselling approach" (op. cit.: 221) which might "foster self-reflection, empathy and personal empowerment" (ibid.). The contribution of Jackson to the current project was the contention that emotional wellbeing amongst the highly able can be problematic. The foregrounding of the voices of students was also considered effective in lending authenticity to the findings. In her defence of the counselling approach in support of the highly able at school Peterson (2006) argues that this is necessary because of the disjuncture between positive stereotypes of successful examination candidates in the media and the lived experience of gifted but troubled students:

Positive media stereotypes and school images of intellectually gifted students usually do not make a compelling argument that there are ... a multitude of social and emotional concerns in this population. Associating the word disability or risk or needs with the idea of giftedness simply may not resonate with educators. (Peterson 2006: 43)

She rightly argues that the superficial markers of high achievement may mask more complex needs which serve to challenge the assumption that the identity of the high achiever can only be validated by examination success.

2.5.4 *Inclusive approaches*

In parallel to the political development of the compliance model associated with NAGTY, a number of studies have focussed on practice which addresses underachievement amongst potential high achievers. These can be characterised according to the organisation level upon which they focussed, with Eyre (1997), Montgomery (2009a), and Fitton (2010) emphasising the critical role of the school at the macro level and Wallace (2004; 2010) and Winstanley (2004; 2010b) on the classroom at the micro level. The advantage of the focus on underachievement is that it is both practically necessary and politically credible. Whilst there is an understanding that the socio-economic context of the learner is accounted for, in keeping with Paulo Freire's liberal ideal (Freire 1996 in Wallace et al. 2010: 67), there is a particular focus in the research cited on the moral imperative of providing adequately for the potential high achiever:

For more able children, even where they may be treated equally ... in many ways, they can often lack the one aspect of equality they most crave: equality of challenge from a personal perspective. ... This ... is viewed as a luxury by some practitioners who are happy to let the able cater for themselves, declaring specific support to be some kind of pandering to elitist principles. (Winstanley 2010a: 103)

In short, the incorporation of the inclusion agenda in strategies for the nurture of high ability can help deflect the accusations of elitism often levelled at those engaged in education for high achievement (Ball 2003; Power et al. 2003; White 2006).

2.5.5 *Vygotskyan theory and pedagogy for high achievers*

It has been established from the reviews by OFSTED and DCSF that the NAGTY approach to the support of the gifted and talented in our schools was undermined by an over-emphasis on measurement and compliance and a corresponding lack of direction and coherence on pedagogical practice. Although the identification process was mandatory for all schools, the resources to which they gave access were limited to only a few pupils within them (DCSF 2009; OFSTED 2009). In contrast, Wallace (1993) was developing a classroom-based approach which drew upon the Vygotskyan notion of learner challenge stimulated by accurately gauged teacher

intervention. This is captured by Winstanley (2010a) in her critique of Wallace's 'Thinking Actively in a Social Context' (TASC), thus:

... learning takes place when learners and mentors negotiate meaning, with the learners extending their understanding into new areas of competence and knowing. (Winstanley 2010a: 121)

This conceptualisation of teaching is attractive because it offers a strategic approach for all engaged in the practice of the classroom and especially those committed to the fulfilment of the potential of the highly able. The contribution of research informed by Vygotskian theory has been to extend the notion of need in the context of the gifted from purely pastoral consideration to practice in the classroom. The premise of such work is that failure to address the cognitive and intellectual needs of such pupils risks diminishing their motivation and impoverishing their classroom experience:

Cognitive challenge ... built into tasks represent key extrinsic factors that have been found necessary ... for highly able learners.... When we set a more open problem to which the learner does not know the answer then the inbuilt propensity to seek closure .. (consonance) drives them to find one. If teachers can harness this natural tendency by appropriate task design then they can motivate pupils very strongly. (Montgomery 2009b: 12)

Neglect of pedagogical considerations may even exacerbate issues in such pupils' emotional development:

The influence of life in the classroom on children's social and emotional wellbeing is enormous. Children who enjoy their learning experiences become happy and enthusiastic about their work... The defining characteristic of ... the [gifted and talented] research project schools, apart from the quality of teaching and learning, was the care and attention given to individual pupils. (Leyden 2010: 43-44)

The next section shows how sophisticated the research and development of classroom practice has become and the scope schools have to institute provision for high achievers which is beneficial throughout the ability range.

2.5.6 Equality of Challenge

The emphasis on philosophically grounded pedagogy in providing for potential high achievers is pursued by Winstanley (2010b), who builds on Montgomery (2009b),

and cites Vygotskian ‘cognitive dissonance’ as a key motivator in the classroom, especially where engagement and motivation of potential high achievers is at a premium.

Setting a complex challenge induces dissonance which is felt as a kind of psychological unease... Strategies for regaining psychological comfort are then activated by learners to assuage the unease. This makes the harnessing of cognitive dissonance a useful tactic for teachers wishing to motivate pupils.
(Winstanley 2010b: 53)

She speaks of the risks implicit in not stimulating dissonance and thereby academic challenge - “Children do not bother to even try if a task seems very easy.” (op. cit.: 20) – and goes on to outline the necessary components of a challenging, but needs-sensitive curriculum. Foremost are teacher behaviours which foreground “novelty and passion” (op. cit.: 123ff). In outlining the problem of inserting novelty into classroom practice without a suitable empirical justification for doing so, she points up the need for caution:

One potential danger is that novelty could detract from what matters, rather than serving to enhance learning. Counteracting this is a matter balance between what is new and what is familiar, not just in terms of physical surroundings, but also for cognitive and psychological factors ... When working with children who are very sensitive to routines and who lack confidence in general, any kind of novelty that disrupts regular practice must be considered with care. (Winstanley 2010b: 127)

This research seeks to ascertain what research needs to be undertaken to enhance and legitimise this approach. It is also concerned with gauging the training needs implied by the kind of sophisticated differentiation inherent in the concept of equality of challenge as a schoolwide strategy. The further challenge of addressing the sensitivities of pupils with ASD/ Asperger’s Syndrome to disrupted routines and lack of structure is suggested by Jackson (2002) in his personal account of life as a high school student with Asperger’s Syndrome.

2.5.7 Mindsets and the self-image of potential high achievers

In addition to the external factors impacting on wellbeing and achievement, this research asks what forms of support are available for gifted pupils outside the

classroom. Because giftedness is not defined as a special educational need, it is vulnerable to the effects of funding cuts and political change as has been suggested above. The part of the research is predicated however on the understanding that the pastoral needs of highly able pupils are complex and demand skilled training. Dweck's (2006) theory of mindsets is a key strand in the recent literature about the malleable qualities of intelligence and the degree to which it can be cultivated through nurture of intellectual qualities. Her contribution is critical from the perspective of this study because she pinpoints the middle secondary years as a pivotal time in the successful development of a 'growth'-minded outlook:

The transition to junior high is a time of great challenge ... The work gets much harder, the grading policies toughen up, the teaching becomes less personalised. And all this happens while students are coping with their new adolescent bodies and roles. (Dweck 2006: 57)

And she rejects wholly the lowering of standards to ensure that pupil self-esteem is not impaired:

Lowering standards just leads to poorly educated students who feel entitled to easy work and lavish praise. (Dweck 2006: 193)

Her basic position is that the 'self' of the highly able child must be properly cultivated through a nourishing curriculum which both "challenges and nurtures" (ibid.: 198). The essence of the argument is that effective nurture does not imply softening-up or dumbing-down. Of similar relevance is Francis (2009) and Francis et al. (2010) who likewise focus on the problematic nature of adolescent development and attitudes on the part of the self and peers to high academic achievement with reference to the effect of gender specifically.

The gendered subjectivities of high achieving school pupils are examined [in this research], demonstrating the uneasy relationship between high educational achievement and peer popularity. Data from a study involving classroom observation and interviews ... are applied to analyse The Boffin as pariah, and as 'queer' in the classroom ... It is argued that application of this stigmatised term functioned as a powerful deterrent to 'excessive' performances of achievement, for all pupils. (Francis 2009: Abstract)

Although her primary focus is on the role of gender, her report on the consequences for able pupils of identification by the school as gifted and talented, or by peers as “boffin”, is both concerning and influential. The risk to the able teenager situated at the intersection of social pressures and academic aspiration is clearly outlined. The use of interviews for data collection for example is also instructive.

2.6 Previous research on children’s experience of education for achievement

Pomerantz and Pomerantz (2002) were influential in showing how listening to pupils can prove valuable in understanding the reasons for underachievement amongst potential high achievers. Their focus was directed more on the peer pressure experienced by the highly able which, in certain contexts can lead to non-fulfilment of academic targets. The authors speak of “constructs highlighted as facilitating and debilitating” (op. cit.: 9) relative to school performance and analyse by interview responses factors in underachievement. Their key finding was that ‘Able Underachievers’ “did not want to associate with” ‘Able Achievers’ (ibid.). This suggested the idea of exploring peer culture and pressures arising as a theme in constructing interview questions for this project. Their methodology provided a helpful model at the design phase, although they focussed particularly on harmonising relations between the two school sub-groups (achievers/under-achievers). Stopper’s (2000) work on the relative merits of affiliation between groups of achievers represents a shift of management perspective away from the purely inclusive, towards one which was designed to enhance the academic achievement of a minority. Stopper considers this to be a form of need which, if unfulfilled, could be injurious to a highly able pupil:

Other needs ... have their origin in ... an ‘affiliation’ – shared with those who have similar talents or abilities and which form the basis for grouping strategies that bring such children together for targeted learning experiences. Such an affiliation might be seen as fundamental to ... a healthy self-concept: in part providing a realistic appraisal of one’s talents and offering ... reassurances that one is not isolated in the life-challenges to be faced, by virtue of personal interests or through one’s hopes and aspirations. (Stopper 2000: 4)

Stopper (2000) is an important positional work because it epitomises the key issues for children, teachers and parents in coming to terms with the responsibilities and risks that appear to go hand-in-hand with experience of education for high achievement. Just

as Maslow in his Hierarchy of Human Needs (Maslow 1954 and Appendix 2; Leyden 2010) had posited the central importance in all human development of needs spanning the physiological to the aesthetic, so Stopper argues that there is a risk that “self-actualisation” (Stopper 2000: 4) – or the full realisation of potential – may not occur if the “holistic needs of the gifted and talented” are not given sufficient consideration as a “means of structuring provision at home and at school” (ibid.). In other words, whilst the needs may be universal, the means of fulfilling them will be different for every child including the highly able. From a methodological perspective, Stopper’s synthesis of research on the support systems available to educators in supporting the highly able, from curriculum organisation to classroom interventions has proved influential.

2.7 The perspective of parents

Amongst the key research achievements of NAGTY was the study conducted by Mazzoli and Campbell et al. (2006b) of parental attitudes to the programmes on offer to their gifted children. A sample of the responses from the interviews conducted shows the preoccupations of these parents and suggests a way forward in the design phase of this project:

It is clear that schools in general are not capable of dealing with gifted and talented children.

We feel that academically his needs should be met within the school day and on a regular basis, not as and when we can afford it.

At school it would help if children were in ability sets for core subjects as he is aware of others calling him a swat.

There is still the ‘geeky’ image of bright children which mine do not want to be associated with.

More important than external enrichment activities is the amount of differentiation in lessons and the opportunities in the school day to stretch the gifted child’s abilities and interests.

(parent interview extracts from Mazzoli, Campbell et al. 2006b: 13-14)

The ambivalence of parents towards the notional identification of their child as gifted and the negativity towards the school’s capacity to deliver provoked further thinking

about the scope of the planned fieldwork. It was considered helpful to explore in interviews with parents their attitudes to the curriculum offer of the participating schools.

The relationship of parents to their gifted children and of parents to their children's education more generally is an area that is under-researched, but there is evidence which shows that parents do have a relationship to their children's education and that this is influenced by their socio-economic status. It is acknowledged that parental involvement can be a factor in improving the quality of pupils' education in a variety of ways, from the impact they have on the cognitive and social development of their children, to acting as advocates on their children's behalf.

(Mazzoli, Campbell et al. 2006b: 14)

It was considered feasible and important to include parent attitudes in the project findings, although socio-economic factors would remain outside of the project brief because of the limitations of time and resources. A key message was the acceptance that parental attitudes in this area were under-researched. Related research, including especially Grolnick and Ryan (1989) and Goodall (2012), share the premise that "attributes of parent style or behaviour" are highly significant in determining a child's relative "achievement and adjustment in school" (Grolnick and Ryan 1989: 143). In Goodall's case, the research goes further in citing an "authoritative parenting" model as an approach most conducive to successful engagement by the child with school and often a prerequisite for high achievement. It can be characterised as a parenting style founded on interest and involvement in learning in the widest sense, not merely schooling, together with a high degree of sophisticated adaptability. Her report concludes:

... the attitude to learning in the home will remain crucial for achievement throughout the child's educational career ... Parents operating within the authoritative spectrum will change their interactions with [their] children as those children grow and age; [It] offers the best scope for children's achievement, as it allows parents to respond most effectively to those changes.

(Goodall 2012: 13)

Regarding method, Grolnick and Ryan interviewed a large sample of 114 parents of primary age children, whilst Goodall conducted a systematic review of related

research, but no fieldwork. It was noted that interview was the method of choice for Mazzoli, Campbell et al. (2006b), but more detailed analysis of how to integrate this approach into the fieldwork as a whole will take place in Chapter 3. Lastly then, in light of the focus in schools within my professional network on high performance and higher education success rates and my own experience as Headteacher of parental expectations in this area, it was decided to include parents in the investigation.

2.8 Assessment, aspiration and need

Recent research on assessment and its potentially negative impact on learning (Amrein and Berliner 2003) has found that successive years of teachers teaching to the test has led to demotivation and the predominance of superficial learning at the expense of more profound understandings. Stobart (2008) in particular is polemical in his stance on “high stakes accountability tests” which serve to “constrain teaching” (op. cit. 108).

What I would like to see develop is an assessment culture in which cue-spotting and recall are not enough, so that the backwash on teaching and learning is to encourage flexible problem-solving ... (Stobart *ibid.*)

The focus in the fieldwork would be upon the conflict between testing for the purpose of school accountability and the need for the kind of “novelty and passion” advocated by Winstanley (2010b: 123) which motivate and fulfil highly able pupils. Moreover, it sought to triangulate the attitude of pupils, parents and schools to grades as passports to Higher Education or the professions. It was suspected that this might perpetuate the kind of superficial view of learning identified by Dore (1980) and reprised recently by Stobart:

The consequence of qualifications being central to job selection is impoverished teaching and learning ... (Dore) wrote that ‘more qualification earning is ... ritualistic, tedious, suffused with anxiety and boredom, destructive of curiosity and imagination ... (Dore 1976, p. ix in Stobart 2008: 95)

In addition to the stultifying effect of the current assessment framework on classroom practice, it can be argued with Winstanley that high or exceptional ability can be conceived of as a need - “high ability could benefit from being re-framed as a SEN”

(Winstanley 2004: 102). The logic of this assumption is that provision should be matched to this need and codified. Such a philosophy is more pertinent than ever because of the absence of any accountability to make proper provision for the highly able (Baker 2010). Fulfilling the potential high achiever academically requires sophisticated approaches, as is illustrated above. In the interests of structural “coherence”, Winstanley argues that it is vital that teachers are equipped to deal with high ability issues” (2004: 102).

2.9 Summary of findings from the literature

The stimuli for this research included anecdotal evidence from my professional experience and recent political developments which have impacted on provision for the gifted and talented. The brief historical survey and the study of the evolution of key theoretical concepts suggested that project design should have precision. Gifted and talented education has a controversial and divisive history. This has been brought about by the polarisation of educationalists around competing definitions of the nature of intelligence.

2.9.1 The position of the learner – actual or potential high achiever?

This review has illustrated how conceptions of intelligence have changed markedly over the last century or so. From an inherited, fixed mental quality denoting innate intellectual superiority (Galton 1865), psychologists and educators now conceive of it as a flexible, organic quality which is capable of fulfilment if harnessed to the correct ‘mindset’ (Dweck 2006). This has implications for the initial premise of this research that the constructs of ‘high ability’ and ‘high achievement’ can be used interchangeably. Such a position begs questions however about the paradigm of intelligence within which the research is set: “fixed” or “growth”? On the basis of the evidence presented, the conceptualisation of intelligence as malleable is most persuasive. Such an understanding aligns with the educational vision upon which this research is predicated. If “education is for life” and we consider the poppy something capable of cultivation and flowering, then it is justified to focus the research questions on those pupils whom we know or suspect to have the capacity to develop into high achieving learners. This is a supposition which can be made in a school context because of the availability of a range of indicators, from quantitative performance data to

qualitative teacher recommendation, which suggest the potential for high performance at GCSE and beyond. There are sound philosophical reasons for distinguishing clearly between achievement and ability at a profound level. Whilst ‘achievement’ can be defined as the state of a learner who has completed an assessment task successfully, ‘ability’ suggests an propensity to do so at some point in the future. In the pragmatic world of the school, the focus of teachers is dictated by the data on the *previous* academic achievements (often known as prior attainment) of the pupil and, rightly or wrongly, this is reified as a firm indicator of how well that pupil should do in the future. This takes little or no account of the ‘catalysts’ identified by Gagné (1985 and 2009), such as chance, environment and developmental rates (See Appendix 6).

2.9.2 Implications for the Methodology

The review of the literature has suggested a key place in the research design for the voice of pupils, following Stopper (2000) and Pomerantz and Pomerantz (2002). It has sharpened the conceptual underpinning of the research by revealing the seminal influence of Hollingworth’s (1942) work on understanding of the needs and potential of gifted children from the holistic perspective. The readings on recent political and economic events such as the change of government in 2010, the economic crash before that and the demise of key professional bodies such as NAGTY have suggested a place in the research sample for school leaders and practitioners with experience both of the classroom and of middle management responsibility for working with the available resources in the interests of gifted and talented children.

2.9.3 Findings for the system context

The apparent paradigm shift which has occurred in high ability studies has brought in its trail a series of constructs which have formed the basis of the project undertaken. These are summarised in Table 2.3 overleaf. A key focus in this investigation is on changing forms of provision for the highly able in an unfavourable economic and political environment. The review of the literature has shown that centrally funded provision for such pupils has been most under threat in times of uncertainty. Where an independently trialled and philosophically grounded programme has been devised, as in the case of Renzulli’s (2000) Schoolwide

Table 2.3 Table of constructs informing design of the project and derived from a review of the literature on education of the highly able

Theoretical construct	Source text/author	Influence on project design	Relevance to Research Questions
Quantitative identification of highly able pupils	Brody (2000) for synthesis of practice historically in History of Theories and 'Measurement of Intelligence'	Underpins pupil sampling process	RQ1 Clarification of the target population
Pedagogy and high achievement	Vygotsky (1978) and the concept of cognitive dissonance/consonance in Mind and Society	Investigation of classroom practice	RQ1 - RQ2 Identification of practice which aids or impedes high achievement
Whole school and system-wide programmes	Renzulli (2000) on the 'Schoolwide Enrichment Model'	Exploration of similar or related models currently use	RQ1 - RQ3 The role of the school in aiding fulfilment of high academic potential
Emotional development and support	Hollingworth's (1926) conceptualisation of education for the gifted as "nurture"	Investigation of support outside of the classroom on "holistic" basis	RQ2-3 Data on wellbeing potential inhibitor
Pupil Voice	Bloom's 'Chicago studies' and recent interview-based research with pupils (Pomerantz and Pomerantz 2002)	Pupil interview method	RQ1-2 Explore pupil attitudes to classroom experience and own aspirations
Counselling approaches	US research influential, especially Addressing counselling needs of gifted students (Peterson 2006)	Staff interviews - to include Counsellors	RQ2-3 Perspective on personal barriers
Equality of Challenge	Specialised provision for highly able pupils by differentiated input as per Winstanley (2010b) in 'Ingredients of Challenge'	Interview schedule to focus on pupil experience of teaching and learning for high achievement	RQ1 Investigation of what succeeds in motivating high achievers in the classroom
Differentiation, need and capability	Education of the gifted as a need as argued by Saito (2003) and implicitly Nussbaum (2011) in 'The Central Capabilities'	Interviews with senior staff to establish level and commitment of provision	RQ3 Ascertain the challenges for school leaders
Assessment and academic aspiration	Stobart's polemic against excess testing, 'Testing Times' (2008)	Interview schedule to focus on pupil attitudes to testing and effect on performance	RQ2-3 Investigate the gap between pupil, parent and teacher attitudes to grades

Enrichment Model, the outcome can be more favourable. The paradox for educators in this field however is securing such provision with consistency in a changing political and economic context.

2.10 Concluding discussion

The survey has illustrated that contemporary pedagogical theory in high ability education is increasingly sophisticated and morally more appealing than, say selective education or ‘pull-out programmes’ on the NAGTY model, because of its inclusive stance (Winstanley 2004; Montgomery 2009a; Wallace et al. 2010). Such provision however is not well served by current assessment frameworks which encourage superficial teaching to the test. The intellectual satisfaction derived from cognitive challenge, is all too often diminished. Framing high ability as a need is attractive because of the opportunity this provides for codifying practice and insulating it from political instability. There is, it can be concluded, a case for an integrated approach akin to the capability approach of some modern economic and educational philosophers:

To offer children straightforward, comfortable and unchallenging learning experiences is to deny them the excitement – and the risks – of truly educational experience, and thus to deprive them of the encounter with what Nussbaum describes as ‘the messy, unclear stuff of which our humanity made’. (Suisa 2008: 588)

Whilst this is of course true of all children, it may be the case that because of the weight of academic expectation placed upon the shoulders of the highly able such opportunities are limited. This investigation seeks evidence from highly able pupils themselves that this is not the case in their experience of the classroom and that they are sufficiently challenged. It also asks what school leaders are doing to ensure that their pupils “encounter ‘the messy stuff’” over and above their ability to pass examinations and, in short, flourish.

Chapter 3 – Design and Methodology

3.1 The research questions

The questions which emerged from the preliminary discussion in Chapter One (page 25) were modified in light of the findings from the review of the literature. It was also decided to omit the original question at how pupils' needs were currently being met because it was judged that this information would emerge from the remaining questions. Thus the questions to be addressed by the research were as follows:

1. How can high achieving pupils of secondary age be nurtured so that they fulfil their academic potential?
2. What experiences affect their achievement and wellbeing? How can these be addressed?
3. What do teachers need to know in order to maximize the achievement and wellbeing of highly academic pupils and minimise the impact of negative risk factors?

The idea of nurture in particular was influenced by Hollingsworth's (1926 and 1942) work. In seeking answers to these questions, a philosophical basis was defined and a project design constructed most suited to the type of inquiry.

The key focus was on potentially high achieving pupils in the middle years of schooling and their experience of the teaching, learning and support provided by their schools. It sought to capture pupils' appreciation of that experience and interpret it. It also sought an understanding of how that provision could be shared, extended or improved for the benefit of pupils themselves and teachers and administrators. There were key findings from the literature review (Chapter Two) which shaped the preliminary design phase. These included the work on pupils' experience by Stopper (2000), Pomerantz and Pomerantz (2002) and Francis et al. (2010), school leadership by Fitton (2010) and parents by Mazzoli and Campbell et al. (2006b). This was because of their focus on pupils and their environment – school and family – and the effectiveness of their respective methodologies.

3.2 The philosophical basis

Because of this focus on the lived experience of the participants, the philosophical approach can be considered “interpretivist” (Denzin and Lincoln 1998-8; Clandinin and Connelly 2000; Pring 2004; Silverman 2006). This is defined by Pring (2004) as a mode of inquiry which aims to draw out the “subjective meanings” of the researched, in this case the pupils and those caring for them, in order to grasp the “different understandings and interpretations which the participants bring with them” (op. cit.: 98). It was further assumed that the reality under investigation was “socially constructed” (op. cit.: 49) both by participants (in this case the pupils themselves, their teachers and support staff) and researcher (a serving Headteacher). From an ontological perspective, this locates the research in a constructivist field. In other words, the reality of provision for high achievement was accepted to be a ‘construction’ or perception on the part of the pupils, teachers and parents (op. cit.: 47-8). A qualitative epistemology was preferred because of the intention to interpret pupils’ and others’ experience rather than, at this stage, quantify any aspect of this explicitly. This was not to deny the validity of positivist approaches in this field, with potential opportunities noted for qualitative investigation of, for example, pupil attitudes and pupil performance across the sector (Mazzoli et al. 2005).

3.3 Theoretical framework of the Research Questions

The methodological problem which arose was twofold: a) how to collect the data efficiently and within constraints of time and resources? b) how to analyse the data objectively, making room for challenges to received thinking to emerge? An interpretivist approach with interviews as the key research tool seemed to offer an effective answer to these questions. It was important to ensure that the voices of the pupils themselves and the adults involved in their education were given prominence in the research findings. The interview-based studies of Pomerantz and Pomerantz (2002) and Danby and Farrell (2005) were influential in this respect. Such an approach was shaped by DCSF criticism of NAGTY that it needed to “communicate direct (sic) to gifted and talented coordinators at school ... as well as to young people” (DCSF 2009: 32). The limitations of a single method are acknowledged (c.f. Gorard and Taylor’s (2004) critique), but these were considered to be offset by a commitment to generate

authenticity and to review methods reflexively at suitable points. Recommendations for further mixed method studies and comparative study of the qualitative data emerging from this study with quantitative results from other investigations are addressed in the Chapter 7 discussion. Firstly, it was necessary to design a project which addressed the research questions appropriately and within a secure theoretical framework.

3.3.1 Research Question One: How can high achieving pupils of secondary age be nurtured so that they fulfil their academic potential?

The relevance of this question was borne out by the key finding from the literature review (Chapter Two) that high achievers often do not fulfil their academic potential and may experience moderate to severe emotional difficulties at school. Research which supported this finding included Jackson (1998), Winstanley (2004), Peterson (2006), Mazzoli et al. (2006a), Montgomery (2009a), Wallace et al. (2010), and Leyden (2010). Assuming an interpretive approach using interviews, it was decided to devise a semi-structured interview schedule for use with middle years pupils, their staff and parents. Questions in this section focussed on what helped pupils succeed in their learning and made school enjoyable.

3.3.2 Research Question Two: What experiences affect high achieving pupils' achievement and wellbeing? How can these be addressed?

The literature review had highlighted the relevance of this question because of the finding that in-school programmes for the Gifted and Talented are under severe management and financial pressure (Baker 2010) and that the key national support programmes for high achievers, NAGTY, had failed (DCSF 2009; OFSTED 2009; Smithers and Robinson 2012). This finding drove the decision to incorporate staff and school leaders in the interview process to gain insights into the impact of a changing economic and political context. It was also hoped that pupils would offer insights, as it was they who could be losing out in the absence of centrally funded provision. Interview schedules therefore included questions on the level of support they had experienced and what appeared to succeed most effectively. The aim was to elicit from them an idea of their level of aspiration and gauge the pressure they were experiencing

to achieve this and where this came from. This objective was derived from the finding in the literature that grades themselves could at once be an object of aspiration, a product of superficial learning and a source of stress (Dore 1976 and 1980; Amrein and Berliner 2003; Stobart 2008).

3.3.3 Research Question Three: What do teachers need to know in order to maximize the achievement and wellbeing of highly academic pupils and minimise the impact of negative risk factors?

The third question aimed to find out what teachers themselves should be aware of in providing for highly academic pupils so that achievement could be maximised and risk of under-performance or disengagement minimised. The literature here had revealed that sometimes in the culture of schools there were obstacles to the fulfilment of these pupils' potential, such as negative peer pressure (Francis 2009 and 2010c; Leyden 2010) or teacher apathy (Gagné 2009). Schools had different ways of addressing these, to greater or lesser effect, as observed for example by Eyre (1997) and Wallace (2010). Here, the interview schedule contained a section on potential inhibitors to achievement at school, but predominantly outside the classroom. The aim was to establish how effective the culture of the school was in supporting learning for high achievement and in offsetting negative external pressures.

3.4 Design of the interview phase

The main considerations at this stage of the design process were, firstly, establishing the data collection method and then sequencing key stages in the fieldwork. It was decided to conduct two studies, which came to be known as Study One and Study Two, and to use interviews as the basis of the investigation. The initial reasons for conducting two studies were to enable the piloting of the research instruments. Study One was originally conceived as a pilot study with the intention of trialling the interview questions and approaches. It became apparent however that the quantity and quality of the initial findings warranted more systematic analysis. This meant developing this pilot into a study in its own right - Study One. This study became an important opportunity to facilitate the capture of rich, relevant data, at an

early stage as it emerged. It also enabled evaluation of method and instruments in advance of Study Two.

Figure 3.1 Sequence of phases in Study One and Study Two fieldwork

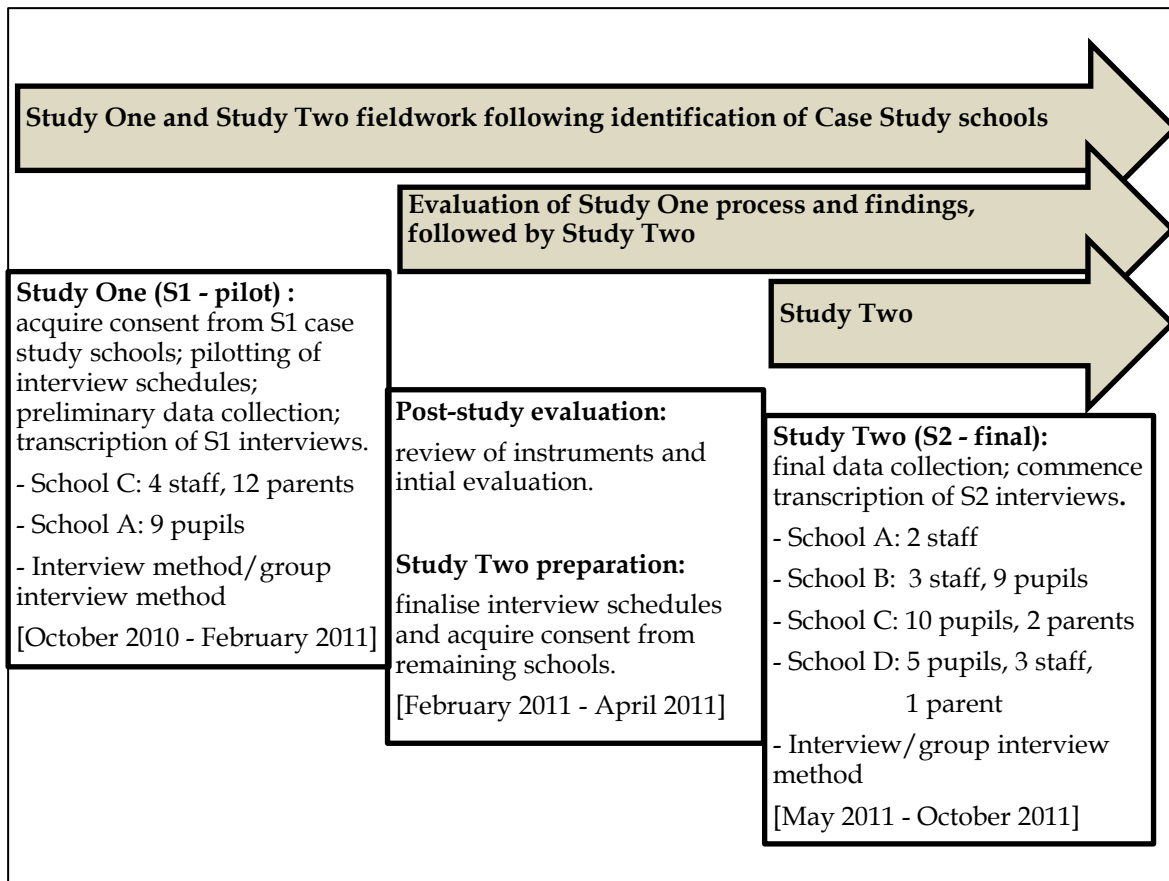


Figure 3.1 above illustrates how the phasing of the two studies was designed and carried out. Figure 3.2 on page 79 illustrates further the particular actions within each phase and sets out the timescale for the fieldwork as a whole. It also locates the fieldwork within the wider process of case study identification and data analysis. Tables 3.1-4 (below, pp. 70, 72, 75 and 76) illustrate the make-up of the constituent groups of staff and pupils in each case study.

Various interview methods were explored including open-ended, semi-structured and focus groups. Robson (2003) considers interviews particularly appropriate “where a study focusses on the meaning of particular phenomena to participants” (op. cit.: 271). Semi-structured interviews are, it is claimed, “widely used

in flexible designs ... as the sole method or in combination with others" (op. cit. : 278). This view is supported by Smith and Osborn (2003) who summarise the advantages of the technique, thus:

It facilitates rapport/empathy, allows greater flexibility of coverage and allows the interview to go into novel areas, and it tends to produce richer data. (Smith and Osborn 2003: 57)

The two key considerations were to do with the format of interviews with adults and pupils and, secondly, how to ensure that ethical safeguards remained in place, without compromising the wellbeing of the pupils or relations between the researcher and the schools (Pomerantz and Pomerantz 2002; Danby and Farrell 2005; Morrow 2005; Greig et al. 2007; Tinson 2009).

A variation of the focus group method was developed which allowed research questions to be addressed with groups of Year 9 pupils. Sometimes these are known as 'group interviews' but, as Robson (2003) has noted: "the generic term 'group interview' has tended to be used interchangeably with 'focus group' because of the latter's popularity..." (op. cit. 283). They were interviewed in groups of three, with a semi-structured interview plan designed around the focus areas – experience of teaching and learning in classrooms, support provided by the school, aspirations and inhibitors to academic fulfilment. Following Robson (op. cit), the advantages and limitations were considered. Previous projects involving interviews with children were also considered, such as Richardson (2008), because of her focus on Year 9 pupils specifically, Stopper (2000) and Pomerantz and Pomerantz (2002).

It was important for the participants to be relaxed and not to be placed "on the spot" – as they may have felt if interviewed on their own. If possible a collective response was sought which could be attributed not to one voice, but rather reflect the attitude of a representative sample. Focus groups with pupils were repeated three times in each case study school, usually with three pupils, but on one occasion four. This was designed to enhance generalisability and reliability of the findings. Whilst it is understood that "generalisation from focus group data is problematic" (Robson, 2003:289), the ability to "identify issues which recur across groups (of interviewees)" (ibid.) was considered desirable. Repeating the interviews within the case study schools

and then across the sample schools would aid “theoretical generalisation” (ibid.). As Robson (2003) points out the “group dynamics” implicit in this approach would allow for a “consistent and shared view” (op. cit.: 284) to emerge. It was understood however that whilst there would be limited scope for hard, “empirical generalisation” (op. cit. 289), such interviews would at least enable the identification of “issues for the participants” (ibid.).

Interviews with school staff were also to be conducted, using a semi-structured format and on a one-to-one basis. Parents were invited to take part in focus groups. In both cases interview schedules addressed the Research Questions and were designed to allow scope for participants to express themselves as freely as possible. Grolnick and Ryan (1989) and Mazzoli and Campbell et al. (2006b) provided models for this part of the investigation. Although their study was on a larger scale, their conclusion suggested this technique would be an important means of triangulating results from the pupil and staff interviews:

... the “search for excellence” in education should proceed beyond the classroom context *per se* to what is perhaps the most pervasive socialising influence on children’s school related functioning – namely, their parents. (Grolnick 1989: 152)

Limitations and advantages of the interview approach adopted are evaluated in Chapter Four.

3.5 Rationale for a case study design

It was decided in the next phase of planning not to conduct interviews solely in my own school because of the possible ethical implications for the school community and also because of the need to enhance generalisability and reliability of the findings. Repeating the interview method in a range of settings appeared an effective way of achieving this, with a series of schools (including my own) sampled as potentially fruitful cases. Janesick (1998: 40-41) lists a series of qualitative approaches in educational research which enable researchers themselves “to deal with individuals”, including “case study methods, oral history, ... life history approaches, grounded theory and ethnographic approaches” (ibid.). The preference was for a method that retained a rigorous focus on learners, but at the same time yielded an empirical response to the research questions. Methods other than case study were problematic for

a number of reasons. It might be because of the time commitment entailed in pursuing, say, a subject for life history interview and the relevance of such a method in the context of a study of the educational experiences of adolescents. Alternatively, ethnography would have entailed immersion in a particular community of learners. Mac an Ghaill (1994) offered a feasible template, but professional commitments and limitations of time precluded this option. A mixed methods approach which combined quantitative and qualitative data collection was considered, for example by the inclusion of a survey, but it was decided that a purely qualitative stance was both consistent from a philosophical perspective and economic of time and resources. It is accepted that this would have aided generalisation, but a strong commitment had been made to the qualitative paradigm, justified by the possibility of interpreting the reality of pupils' experience, at least in certain settings. Evaluation of the project strategy will make it clear, it is anticipated, that a quantitative or mixed methods study which builds on the outcomes of the current research would be more than appropriate.

On balance, Yin's (2009) account of the flexibility and applicability of the case study method in both quantitative and qualitative research was persuasive. He argues that it is a form of empirical enquiry which "investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context..." (Yin 2009: 18). He speaks also of "an all-encompassing method – covering the logic of design, data collection techniques and specific approaches to data analysis." (Yin 2009: *ibid.*). This method was therefore selected because of the perceived compatibility with the objects of the inquiry, its time- and cost-efficiency, and the opportunities it provided for generalisability and validity.

3.6 Data Analysis

3.6.1 The Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) method

The aim in adopting this model was to explore through interview responses how participants were "making sense of their personal and social world" (Smith and Osborn 2003: 51). It is a phenomenological method, similar to those found elsewhere to have produced findings about research subjects' "lifeworlds" (Van Manen 1990; Yair 2009) with parallels to what was sought in this project. The project was designed to elicit an understanding of the experience of being a potential high achiever, both inside and outside school.

The advantage of a phenomenological method in the context of this research was that it focussed on “individuals’ perceptions of objects or events” (Smith 2008: 40), in this case high end educational provision. Secondly, it emphasised the “central role for the analyst” (ibid.) in making sense of those perceptions. As a practitioner and Headteacher, IPA was considered to offer a suitable means of exploring my own experience as well as that of the participants.

3.6.2 Characteristics of IPA method of data analysis

IPA as a means of qualitative data analysis in interview-based studies has a tradition in research in psychology (Smith and Osborn 2003; Willig 2001) and was selected for the current study. Exponents of the technique have conducted their research in medical fields, but following publication of integrated methodologies for interviewing and phenomenological analysis (c.f. Hycner (1985)) education researchers have adopted it to good effect (c.f. Kingston (2009)). The basic characteristics of this model are summed up by Smith (2008) as follows:

IPA aims to explore in detail participants’ personal lived experience and how participants make sense of that ... experience. The participant is trying to make sense of their world; the researcher is trying to make sense of the participant trying to make sense of their personal and social world. (Smith op. cit.: 40)

The IPA method was adopted for this study because it fulfilled a number of logistical and conceptual requirements:

1. It is most suitable for relatively small samples. IPA studies have been conducted with as few as one and as many as fifteen samples. Smith and Osborn suggest “five or six as a reasonable sample size” (Smith and Osborn 2003: 54).
2. Its focus on the “particular and individual” (Cohen et al. 2007: 8), or its idiographic character, was considered highly compatible with the research aims – namely to capture and analyse the subjective experience of the pupils in question.
3. It allowed for the possibility of “unanticipated topics or themes to emerge during analysis” (Smith 2008: 43). In this sense it is ‘inductive’ in character and more resistant to the imposition of preconceived ideas or assumptions by the researcher.

4. It is recognised that it has the capacity potentially to make a contribution to knowledge because of its habit of “interrogating or illuminating existing research” (Smith 2008: 43) – sometimes known as its ‘interrogative’ function.

The method is close to grounded theory approaches (Robson 2003: 192-3), but is less dependent on “movement back and forth – first to the field ..., then back to base ... then back to the field” (ibid. 2003: 193) in the process of data collection. Semi-structured interviews in the case study schools enabled the researcher to schedule single days for this purpose in a way which was not too disruptive to the schools.

3.6.3 Proposed application of the IPA model

It was decided to implement the IPA model by submitting all interview transcripts to analysis on repeated occasions, requiring the line-numbering of transcripts and the formulation of Key Themes, Constituent Themes – both derived from identifiable clusters of meaning. (Tables 4.1 and 5.1-4 in Chapters Four and Five respectively represent summative findings from this stage of the analysis.) This followed the method prescribed by Hycner (1985), Smith (2003), and Willig (2001). Firstly, the transcripts from Study One interviews (originally formulated as a pilot) were analysed by IPA. This aided familiarisation with the process and tentative identification of “meaning units” (Smith (2003: 67)), beginning to emerge as themes. It was decided that an interim spreadsheet would be used which captured emergent themes from this initial reading and which allowed for entry of key extracts by transcript number and line-reference. (See example sheet at Appendix 14). This process was refined at the analysis stage in Study Two where the greater amount of data allowed for construction of IPA sheets focussed specifically on Key Themes emergent from Study One. This was designed to maximise the quantity and richness of the analytical findings and retain a focus on the research questions.

3.7 The strategy for implementation of the case studies

A strategy was devised for implementation of the case studies. It followed (Yin 2009: 80) who recommends construction of a protocol of critical tasks prior to implementation. In this instance the limitation on time and resources made it doubly important to ensure that when opportunities arose to carry out particular tasks – e.g. piloting, live interviews, transcription - these could be utilised to the full because of the

quality of the planning and preparation. The only difference between this research and prescribed approaches, such as Yin (2009) and Robson (2003), was the twin study structure. Study One served both as a pilot to enable trialling of the interview schedule and some of the practical arrangements and also as a key means of collecting interview data. Evaluation of this material has been undertaken in the form of the Study One analysis in Chapter Four. Study One also gave opportunities to reflect on the practical aspects of consent, interview schedules, audio recording and the use of an assistant. These were logged in a Learning Journal and had a significant impact on the process of interviewing in the second phase of data collection, known as Study Two. This twin study model is set out in Figure 3.1 below. This illustrates the sequential nature of the data collection, with Study One preparing the ground methodologically for Study Two, whilst the capacity of the latter to deepen the range of findings was enhanced as a result. This approach was also economical of the researcher's and assistant's time. (It was not desirable to make demands on the respective schools' supply cover budgets, for example, by repeated visits to the case study schools.)

3.7.1 Construction of the case studies

Regarding the balance between selective and non-selective schools in the sample and indeed the gender mix of the pupils interviewed, the approach adopted aligns with Gorard and See (2011) in their study of students' experience of enjoyment at school, who do not discern appreciable differences on the grounds of school type, gender, ethnicity or class in terms of attitudes to and enjoyment of schooling. Their interpretation of the variation in findings was that this was more attributable to the "experience of individual students in schools" (op. cit.: 676) than to any other external factors:

Very little of the variation is explicable by ... student background or intake to schools... (Findings for) reported enjoyment of school and finding lessons interesting are not particularly stratified by the standard sociological variables of class, ethnicity and so on.
(Gorard op. cit. : 675-6)

In the event, the schools agreeing to participate included a girls' selective school (School A), which served as the setting for Study One interviews with pupils, a second boys' selective school (School B), my own school for Study One interviews with both

support staff, teachers and parents (School C), and a mixed Catholic non-selective school (School D). See Table 3.1 overleaf for a breakdown of the sample. Appendix 16 sets out the descriptors for all participating schools.

3.7.2 Sampling of schools

The sampling method was purposive, sharing the characteristics of theoretical sampling in Grounded Theory as described in Silverman (2006) and Cohen et al. (2007). It was decided to concentrate on schools known to the researcher through existing local or professional networks and which were known to provide for high achievers in ways which were relevant to the research questions, either through school-wide programmes or more targeted provision. Thus the sample can also be described as theoretical because it was intended to test the theory that there are increasingly different forms of provision for potential high achievers, pupils' experience of these varies and some are more effective than others in supporting pupils' academic development and all-round wellbeing. The aim of the sample was to provide opportunities to test this theory and produce some tentative explanations (Silverman 2006).

Table 3.1 Make-up of Case Study samples (Schools)

Identifier	School Type	
A	Girls' Selective (Foundation/Academy)	99% 5 A*-C 0% FSM ¹
B	Boys' Selective (Foundation/Academy)	99% 5 A*-C 3% FSM
C	Boys' Selective (Academy)	100% 5 A*-C 1% FSM
D	Mixed Catholic Non-selective (Voluntary Aided)	34% 5 A*-C 15% FSM

¹FSM = Free School Meals

Construction of the sample was also designed to allow for constraints of time and resources, in keeping with the case study method outlined in Stake (1998), Robson (2003) and Yin (2009). Two schools (C and D) were geographically highly accessible. The researcher had professional links with Schools A and B. School D was not only convenient, it controlled against findings from the other case study schools because it was non-selective, had a different results profile and was mixed. (See Table 3.1 below). Following Silverman (2006) the inclusion of a quite different school type in the sample was considered helpful in validating the findings. Selective schools dominated the sample because of the nature of the researcher's own networks as grammar school Headteacher.

Schools identified as candidates for case study were contacted in the term preceding scheduled Study One interviews. They consisted of my own school, where approval was sought from the Chair of Governors, and the three other secondary schools where Headteachers were contacted in writing to grant written consent. (See Appendix 9 for letter of invitation.) All agreed to participate.

3.8 Selection of interview participants

3.8.1 a) *Members of Staff*

Staff selected for interview fell into three categories: headteachers, senior staff with responsibility for high achieving pupils or gifted and talented programmes and support staff whose role was to provide pastoral support. One of the senior staff and two of the support staff (SENCO) were also mainstream classroom teachers. This approach was justified by readings concerned with the role of school leadership in promoting provision and best practice in high ability education (Montgomery 2009a; Fitton 2010). Often there is emphasis on the critical role of senior leadership and in particular headteachers in promoting the cause and creating the management structures providing the necessary vision (Eyre 1997). The purpose in selecting coordinators for programmes orientated toward the gifted and talented was partly to do with the nature of the role but also because, anecdotally, the researcher suspected that such posts were increasingly threatened by budget cuts and reductions in staffing (DfE 2012d).

Lastly, my own experience suggested that staff in a counselling role would have interesting perspectives on the particular concerns of pupils predicted to do well academically but who, for whatever reason, may not be thriving. In my own school, School B in the sample, much in the way of time and resources had been allocated to the recruitment of a School Counsellor and a part-time learning and behaviour support worker and the training up of an Emotional Learning Support Assistant (ELSA) in Emotional Development skills. The work of Peterson (2006), Jackson (1998) and Freeman (1990 and 2008) were also influential.

Table 3.2 Make-up of Case Study samples (Staff only)

	Case Study Schools	A	B	C	D	Total
Staff	Headteacher	1	1	0	1	3
	Deputy HT	0	2	0	0	2
	SENCO (and classroom teacher)	0	0	1	1	2
	G and T Coordinator (and classroom teacher)	1	0	0	1	2
	LSA/Counsellor	0	0	3	0	3
	Total	2	3	4	3	13

Three categories of staff were interviewed, providing an insight into the different locations of responsibility for high achievers in different schools. Two of the four case study schools had a dedicated member of staff paid an allowance for the purpose. Elsewhere responsibility was delegated to a member of the senior leadership. Table 3.2 above illustrates the sample make-up. The sample was theory-based in that the participating staff were either instrumental in shaping school policy (Headteachers, Deputy Headteachers) or had immediate experience of supporting and developing pupils in the classroom or in a pastoral capacity (Gifted and Talented Coordinators, SENCOs and Learning Support Assistants). This followed Mason's assertion that theory-based sampling is defined by its "relevance to the research questions [and the]

theoretical position” (Mason in Silverman 2006: 308). The theory was that the staff identified would aid triangulation of findings from pupil interviews and foreground the relative levels of prioritisation of high ability provision within the case study schools.

3.8.1 b) Pupils

Participants for interview were selected on the basis of the NAGTY Gifted and Talented eligibility criteria (NAGTY 2006 - see Appendix 23). Thus the students selected from the schools in the sample had largely achieved an Average Points Score (APS) at Key Stage 2 of 33 (i.e. within the top 5% nationally). This compares with the national average of 27.4 APS (DfE 2012a) in 2011. In addition, the majority of pupils selected were predicted an APS of 428+ at GCSE (the equivalent of 7-8 A* grades at GCSE) as set out in the NAGTY eligibility criteria (NAGTY 2006 and Appendix 23). This was to enable a focus on those potentially exposed to the factors impacting on pupil enjoyment and fulfilment. Year 9 was selected as the target group because it is a year of transition from KS3 to KS4 and the GCSE curriculum in most schools (c.f. Dweck 2006: 57). Pastoral experience suggested this was the year when wellbeing issues can emerge and underachievement by pupils with high academic potential set in (Eyre 1997; Pomerantz and Pomerantz 2002; Leyden 2010; Wallace 2010).

Equally important was the weight given to teacher nominations. These were designed to give the following information: a) confirmation of the pupil’s academic potential; b) an indication as to whether the pupil was above/below/in line with academic expectations; c) a further indication as to whether the pupil was suited to a Focus Group activity of this nature. The aim here was to ensure a “mix” within each group to help “stimulate and enrich the discussion” (Robson 2003: 286). It was not considered helpful to have all high fliers who were successfully meeting academic targets – but it was hoped that a mixture of current achievement levels would facilitate rich discussion from a vibrant group.

Teachers nominating were also asked to make recommendations on suitability for interviews focussed on wellbeing, taking account of considerations such as pupils’ ability to articulate thoughts about the pastoral system of the school – support outside the classroom, support versus bullying, sanctions and rewards and encouragement of

aspiration. The aim was to minimise the risks to pupils of creating a negative experience through a domestic issue or serious work crisis emerging in the flow of the conversation. This follows best ethical practice in conducting interviews with adolescents by negotiating with staff and gaining informed consent from the pupils prior to interviews taking place (Tinson 2009). Teachers were in the best position to ensure that vulnerable pupils, even if they fulfilled the academic criteria, were not distressed by participation in an interview. Schools used data from their respective SIMS¹ systems to identify potential participants and cross-referenced this with Form Tutor nominations. In School D, the non-selective school, the qualifying criterion was membership of the school's Gifted and Talented group, determined by a prediction of 5 or more A*-C grades at GCSE and teacher nomination. In addition, the school's Gifted and Talented Coordinator verified that the core group of five pupils within this cohort of high achievers were suitable Focus Group participants and would not be placed at risk.

Some schools provided insights at the selection stage which showed how teacher nomination modified the basic academic qualifying criteria. School A in the pilot study reported that one girl had dropped from 9th ranked in the cohort on entry based on Year 7 benchmark data to 64th out of a cohort of 125 by the end of Year 8. The researcher was advised not "to ask about home" in the case of the same pupil, whilst another's attendance was causing concern because it had dropped below 90%. Two others had generated nine meetings between teachers and parents over the year to date, interpreted by the Co-ordinator as increasing parental concern about declining academic performance. In all, three pupils from each of Schools A, B and C were included on the basis of teacher nomination in addition to prior attainment and target data. The boys' schools tended to prioritise performance data and select for interview on the grounds of current working levels, judging whether these were below, in line or above predicted levels. The researcher relied on the Coordinator and the senior leader with responsibility to ensure that the needs of vulnerable students were not compromised. This was in line with Tinson (2009: 103) who advises that the researcher's relationship with the person effectively acting as "gatekeeper" providing

¹ School Information Management System

access to interview subjects is of critical importance. Throughout the interview process, from sample construction to post-interview de-briefs, the various relationships were managed in such a way as to ensure that pupils were properly safeguarded and that a sufficiently rounded picture of interviewees was established prior to interviews proper. No problems were encountered in formulating the interview groups and no pupils withdrew themselves or were withdrawn by parents or school.

Table 3.3 Make-up of Case Study samples (Pupils only)

Case Study Schools	Pupils				
	Gender		Current Working Level vs GCSE Target ¹		
	M	F	Above	On	Below
A	0	9	3	3	3
B	9	0	3	3	3
C	10	0	4	4	2
D	1	4	1	2	2
Total	20	13	11	12	10

The boys participating fulfilled the NAGTY (2006 and Appendix 23) qualifying criterion of Level 8 in Key Stage 3 Mathematics. Schools B and C read the sample selection briefing issued by the researcher as an instruction to select on the basis of the difference between potential and actual ranking within the cohort or Average Points Score at the end of Key Stage 3. Throughout the fieldwork a balance was struck between selection by raw data and discretionary modifications to final interview groupings according to circumstances on the day of the interviews. At School C, for example, a boy whose parent had not initially given consent arrived on the day of the

¹ 428+ Average GCSE points score approx. (= 7-8 A* grade prediction, c.f. Appendix 15 and 23)

interviews with the necessary slip and was allowed to take part, even though this meant that one Focus Group session now consisted of four pupils instead of three. The underlying principle was to ensure that interviewers met with groups which had relevant classroom experience, and support methods, were likely to respond freely and who would not be distressed by their involvement. Table 3.3 below illustrates the distribution and sample make-up.

Table 3.4 Make-up of Case Study samples (Parents only)

	Case Study Schools:	A	B	C	D	Total
Parents	Discussion Group	0	0	12	0	12
	Focus Group	0	0	2	1*	3
	Total	0	0	14	1	15

*telephone interview

3.8.3 c) *Parents*

Parents were selected by two means: firstly by open invitation to parents of the Year 9 cohort as a whole and, secondly, by personal invitation to the parents of the pupils who had participated in the focus groups. In the case of both groups it was conjectured that parents would have immediate relevant experience of parenting a child with high academic potential and correspondingly high expectations of their own. Thus they were considered to be theoretical by Robson's (2003) definition. The first was more opportunistic in that, other than the letter of invitation to all Year 9 parents, no other refinement of the sample was made. This was classed as a Study One exercise, because it enabled refinement of the focus group technique. The second was purposive, by Silverman's (2006) definition, because of the requirement that participating parents be related to participating pupils. Two parents agreed to take part in this focus group, which formed part of the Study Two findings. Further focus groups were sought from the other sample schools to minimise the possibility of bias. In the

event, one acceptance was received at School D from the parent of a child previously interviewed and so a one-to-one telephone interview was arranged and recorded. It was decided to capture as much response data as possible rather than forgo the opportunity because the sampling had not gone according to plan. Table 3.4 below illustrates the make-up of the parent sample.

3.9 Implementation strategy – Studies One and Two

The first task in implementing the case study strategy was to secure ethical approval from the university and to gain consent from the participating schools. Next, the schools themselves were asked to identify pupils according to the criteria outlined above. A twelve month period, following Ethical Approval by the university (University of Roehampton 2010), was set aside for the whole data collection process from consent through to analysis of transcripts. The preliminary study, Study One, was conducted to trial the interview process in the field and to commence identification of emergent themes by the IPA method. The outcomes of this process are described in Chapter Four. Study One was duly completed within the planned four month period following consent. A period of evaluation then took place which helped refine the Study Two process, including interview schedules, approaches to the field work and the emergent themes for analysis. This took a further two months, following which all transcripts were written up from the audio files produced and the process of coding began. Study Two data collection occurred over a four month period, taking full account of modifications to fieldwork suggested by the Study One outcomes and a more sophisticated process of data analysis based on the IPA model described above. Participating schools were thanked for their cooperation within a year of the start of the process and a copy of the abstract of the findings was sent to them sometime after this. The data collection schedule is set out in Figure 3.1 overleaf. This illustrates the interplay of process evaluation and initial results analysis.

3.9.1 Ethical and practical considerations in implementing Studies One and Two

The aim of this section is to describe and evaluate the practical issues which arose from implementing both studies given the complex ethical considerations involved in accessing pupils for interview. It covers the process of securing access, gaining consent

and conducting interviews in the case study schools. Key areas addressed are derived from Burgess and Sieminski (2006). A more detailed evaluation of the interview findings themselves and how these shaped the final stages of the fieldwork in Study Two is explained in Chapter Four.

3.9.1a) Securing access

Consent was sought from the Headteacher or Chair of Governors in each case study school prior to the fieldwork. Parental consent was then gained, following BERA guidelines (BERA 2004) and the university's own published policy (University of Roehampton 2010). This was managed in liaison with either the Deputy Headteacher or Coordinator in each of the schools. The strategy followed Tinson (2009) closely in ensuring that a "gatekeeper" in each school was established to facilitate "access, (be) present when the research was conducted .. and provide advice on aspects of the interview process" (Tinson 2009: 102), including in this case the necessary data about the pupil participants. All consent forms were returned at the latest by the day of the interview itself. All staff and pupil participants were also asked to give consent at the time of the interview itself, in case of last minute doubts. The consent documentation is set out in Appendices 7-9. Signed consent forms were filed alongside interview transcripts for record-keeping purposes and in line with requirements set out in the Ethical Approval application process.

3.9.1b) Safeguarding

All practical precautions were taken to ensure that pupils were safeguarded by doing the necessary pastoral groundwork. Care was taken to ensure that the wellbeing of pupil participants was not undermined in any way by briefing colleagues in the Case Study schools fully about the scope of the project and the potential risks. Their role as gatekeepers was viewed seriously and professionally, following recommended best practice in the key technical literature, namely Tinson (2009), Morrow (2005), Cohen et al. (2007) and Robson (2003).

Figure 3.2 Implementation strategy for Studies One and Two, after Yin’s “Case Study Protocol” (Yin 2009)

Phase in Strategy	Action	Purpose	Desired Outcome	Timescale
1	Identification of Case Study schools	Create a valid and viable sample	Four schools agree to participate	2 months
		Seek consent – schools	Headteachers give consent for schools to participate	
2	Study One - design phase	Produce interview schedules aligned to Research Questions	Initial interview schedule	4 months
		Recruitment of assistant	Observer/helper on hand for all interviews	
3	Study One – implementation	Seek consent	Pupils and their parents give consent	
		Trial staff, pupil and parent interview process	Process evaluation can occur	
		Produce transcripts for analysis	Line-referenced texts for analysis	
		Transcribe interviews from audio files	Initial analysis of emergent themes	
4	Study Two – planning phase	Evaluate Study One process outcomes	Detailed and specific data emerges related to each RQ	2 months
		Produce revised interview schedules	Observer/helper on hand for all interviews	
5	Study Two – implementation	Conduct final round of interviews	Collection of data for results analysis	4 months
6	Final evaluation from field notes	Capture key learning points	Experience in field captured for Data Collection write-up and dissemination	
	Full implementation of IPA data analysis on all transcripts	Elicit key themes from interview transcripts	Scheme for data analysis emerges	

3.9.1c) Research assistant

A second person attended all interviews to act as observer and note-taker using a secure laptop. These notes were both a back-up in case of equipment failure, but also proved a helpful means of checking the accuracy of the transcript from the audio recording. At School C, the assistant's role was essential in leading on all interviews with pupils. It was decided in the interests of ensuring the reliability of the responses that the researcher himself, also Headteacher at the school, should not participate directly. In this case an LSA attended the interview and acted as note-taker. In all interviews with pupils a second adult was present. This allayed any concerns schools might have had on safeguarding grounds. Either the researcher or an assistant transcribed all interviews from the audio files to hard copy.

3.9.1d) Capturing interview responses

All interviews were recorded using a handheld device. Although this failed in the first Study One session, it worked well on all other occasions. Pupils were reminded at the start of each session to speak towards the machine. Transfer of audio files by Bluetooth to the PC was also successful and this enabled deletion of the file from the original device in the interests of security of the data immediately after transfer. All data, i.e. recordings of interviews, were transferred to a single PC and password protected. They will be destroyed on completion of the research write-up. Hard copies of the transcripts were securely filed. Some aural data was lost from one Focus Group in School C because of the inaudibility of one participant, but this could mostly be reconstructed from the written record. Ten group interviews with pupils were conducted overall in Studies One and Two, three in each of Schools A, B and C and one in School D. Capturing responses from parents proved a challenge in the bigger discussion setting, although an assistant was on hand to note down key points. Audio recording was not an option in this context because of the size of the group and the layout of the room. The interviews with parents of pupils who had already participated, both in the Focus Group and on the telephone, were both recorded and transcribed as per all other interviews.

3.9.1e) *Location*

Preparations for the group interviews with pupils consisted of detailed instructions to the facilitator in each school about the need for a quiet room and a workable schedule of interview timings, so that a good balance between break time and lesson time was achieved and disruption to school routines minimised. The only interruptions recorded in the Learning Journal consisted of loud lesson changeover bells in one school. Elsewhere, pupils not involved in the Focus Groups could see through a partition window into the interview room before the start of their afternoon lesson. This did not disrupt the flow of the interview unduly.

3.9.1f) *Language*

Study One interviews with pupils at School A were helpful in suggesting modifications for later interview sessions. For example, the icebreaking process was curtailed because of a tendency to rush the later part of the interview to keep to time. A period of 30-35 minutes was set aside for each interview, with a further 15 minutes either side to allow for sound checks and de-brief with the assistant. Secondly, some reflexive observations about the register of language to be adopted in interviews were noted in the Learning Journal together with thoughts on interview management (see Appendix 24 below). Two shortcomings were identified: a) more time should be given to the interviewees to respond; b) avoid leading questions. Audio playback was invaluable (if not frustrating) in illustrating a number of instances of answers truncated because of a comment or even an audible murmur of approval which appeared momentarily to distract the interviewee. This had the effect of ending some responses prematurely. This echoed the finding of Goodley (1998: 117) about the disruptive effect of “over-enthusiastic interviewing”. The role of the assistant was invaluable in this respect as there had been a commitment to log everything and provide critical feedback after each interview (Learning Journal for 25/2/11 at Appendix 24 below and Yin 2009: 129). Later interviews in Study Two reveal, on playback, longer pauses, fewer audible utterances from the researcher other than the questions, fewer questions within questions and greater fluency generally. Similar feedback from the assistant also showed that the icebreaker tactic appeared to have succeeded so that one interviewee adopted a relaxed posture denoting enthusiastic engagement with the process (see

Appendix 24). Tinson (2009) was influential on interview technique with adolescents. Her finding that effective ice-breakers helped pupils “become familiar with the way in which the researcher talks and asks questions” (Tinson 2009: 120) was found to be apt. This process of execution followed by evaluation was in keeping with the reflexive approach to implementation as a whole. Study Two data collection was modified in light of the experience of the Study One fieldwork.

3.9.1g) Post-interview actions

Key tasks following pupil interviews were: firstly, to transfer the audio data to the PC and delete from handheld; secondly, to transcribe audio data and check accuracy against notes made at the time; lastly, to collate notes made by the assistant and all performance data on the pupils and log this alongside the transcripts. Reflection on the interview process took the form of conversations with the assistant and entries into the Learning Journal. (See Appendix 24.) Initial thoughts about analytical themes also emerged at this point and a position paper for the research supervisors was put together which related preliminary findings back to the research questions. This helped with reflective evaluation of the fieldwork and preliminary data analysis.

3.10 Ensuring reliability

The sampling process was instrumental in ensuring overall reliability of the data collection method. Four schools were selected for the case studies, including the researcher’s home school, with School A acting as pilot for pupil interviews and School B for the staff interviews. It was hoped that they would yield data which supported or challenged the theories underpinning the research. An outlier school (School D) was incorporated in the sample to validate findings about high academic provision from a non-selective perspective. The aim of listening to pupils was intended to be a validating characteristic of the project in itself, but this was strengthened, it was hoped, by the inclusion of staff and parents in separate interviews or Focus Groups. Sampling here was again theoretical in selecting staff who would be anticipated to have valuable insight and first-hand experience. This was designed to ensure that emergent themes analysed from the transcripts could be validated by the inclusion of a range of roles and relationships, all focussed on provision for highly academic young people.

Samples of transcripts and interim spreadsheet analyses were also circulated to two colleagues for validation of proposed cluster headings.

Because of the quality of the findings from the first round of interviews at Schools A and C, Study One data were analysed alongside data from Study Two. This enhanced the reliability of both sets of data. It was accepted that were limitations on the capacity of the case study method to yield statistically generalisable data. The methodological stance of this research however followed that of Flyvberg (2004) in Silverman (2006):

The closeness of the case study to real-life situations ... is important for the development of a nuanced view of reality... Second, cases are important for researchers' own learning processes .. Flyvberg (2004: 22) in Silverman (2006: 305)

The priority was to produce reliable data in response to the research questions in order to gain insights into current practice in high ability education and posit some conclusions about best practice. Study One also helped serve as a pilot for the practical process to be adopted in Study Two and enabled any potential problems with the fieldwork to be minimised. Figures 3.1 and 3.2, on pages 63 and 78 respectively, set out the sequence of events in the execution of the two studies, the identity of the participating schools and the numbers of pupils, staff and parents involved in the different phases.

3.11 Summary

The case study component of the project took 18 months from design phase, through piloting to implementation. It encompassed four sites in a multiple case study format, as outlined in the implementation plan (Figure 3.1) and tested against models illustrated by Yin (2009). It addressed the research hypotheses concerning the wellbeing of high ability learners by adopting a qualitative approach to the collection of data from the pupils themselves, triangulated against findings from the relevant staff and selected parents. A research assistant was employed to aid data collection across the schools and also to act as a proxy in the researcher's home school. (Funding was gained to facilitate payment of expenses and other key resources.) The data were captured by recording on a handheld device and transcription by the researcher and an assistant. Validity and generalisability were provided by careful construction of the case study

subjects, theory-based sampling of interview participants and external checks on data collected by fellow researchers. Opportunities for reflection and evaluation were enhanced by the decision to pilot data collection methods in two of the case study schools. Data from Study One were upgraded to main study status in recognition of the richness of the findings. Reflective practice was adopted by logging experiences in the field in a Learning Journal.

Chapter 4 – Analysis and Evaluation of the initial Case Studies (Study One)

4.1 Introduction

Study One interviews were semi-structured and based on schedules derived from the research questions. (See Appendices 9-12 for example copies.) This allowed for follow-up questions to be added where appropriate in order to deepen the range and depth of the responses. Transcripts were given page and line numbers for ease of referencing, as set out in examples illustrated in Appendices 19-21. All interview data were analysed by the IPA method.

Group interviews with pupils were conducted according to the data collection plan (see Figure 3.1 on page 75). In Study One, three groups of pupils were interviewed at School A only. Staff were interviewed at School C only. One group of parents was invited to take part in a semi-structured discussion at School C, prior to a proposed Focus Group with parents of pupils interviewed at School C as part of Study Two.

The IPA method of data analysis was trialled in Study One to enable themes to emerge from the responses of participants and to enable these to be ordered around Key Themes and Constituent Themes, as described in Hycner (1985), Smith (2003), Willig (2001) and illustrated in Kingston (2009).

4.2 Results of Study One interviews

IPA analysis of the Study One interview transcripts yielded four Key Themes pertinent to the Research Questions, as indicated in the overview illustrated in Table 4.1. These in turn produced a series of Constituent Themes which then formed the basis of the discussion of the salient features of each Key Theme. After close reading of all Study One transcripts, representative quotations were sorted into Tables of Extracts as illustrated in Appendices 16-18 below. Re-reading took place in an intensive six month review period following completion of the interviews, often accompanied by playback of the audio recordings. This helped with the verification of themes identified, further aided by reference of transcripts to two colleagues and a research supervisor. This provided a further check on the validity of the emergent themes.

4.3 Description of the Key Themes from Study One

The aim of Study One was to firm up on the interview schedules prior to the main study. The IPA analysis produced data worthy of more in-depth consideration, however. The schedules themselves were derived from the Research Questions and the responses provided a considerable amount of data relevant to each of these. Analysis occurred in three phases, beginning with a preliminary reading of the transcripts which focussed on evidence for: a) “nurturing ... for potential”, as expressed in Research Question One; b) “experiences ... affecting wellbeing, as expressed in Research Question Two; c) “the maximising of achievement and wellbeing ... and the minimising of negative risk factors”, as expressed in Research Question Three. In the second phase, transcripts were re-read with audio playback and analysed using a provisional IPA analysis spreadsheet. (See example at Appendix 14.) The frequency of references to emerging Constituent Themes was then counted to enable further refinement to occur. Thirdly, a further close analysis of Study One transcripts was conducted to firm up on remaining constituent themes and finalise the coding for each of these. The same method was applied to each set of transcripts. Themes were coded in the form Key Theme first followed by a code for Constituent Theme, thus: 1.1 = Experience of Teaching and Learning (Key Theme 1) + Enjoyment (Constituent Theme 1). Two key references were elicited from the transcripts to underpin discussion of the emergence of the theme. Each section below also concludes with a description of the changes made to Study Two interview schedules in light of Study One findings. Table 4.1 overleaf sets out the Key/Constituent Themes from this analysis and illustrates how the codes deployed throughout this chapter were formulated.

4.3.1 Key Theme One: *‘Experience of Teaching and Learning’*

The aim of this part of the Study One results analysis was to assess the evidence for the Experience of Teaching and Learning as a Key Theme. Secondly, it sought to identify Constituent Themes for further exploration in Study Two, related to practice in the classroom conducive to the fulfilment of potential for high achievement. The examination of the evidence was structured around the three groups of participants in the Case Study interviews – pupils, staff and parents.

Table 4.1 Overview of the relationship between Key Themes and Research Questions, derived from IPA analysis of Study One interview data

RQ		Themes emerging from Pupil Interviews	Themes emerging from Staff Interviews	Themes emerging from Parent Interviews
1	<i>Experience of Teaching and Learning</i>	1.1 Enjoyment 1.2 Disapproval	1.3 Experiential knowledge into practice 1.4 Emotional response	1.5 Approval 1.6 Disapproval
2	<i>Pupil Support</i>	2.1 Facilitator 2.2 Negative emotional response	2.5 Social/emotional provision 2.6 Environment 2.7 Adapted SEN provision	2.9 Positive perceptions
	<i>Aspiration</i>	2.3 Assessment focussed 2.4 Pupil development	2.8 Academic pressures	2.10 Anxieties about the future
3	<i>Potential Inhibitors</i>	3.1 School culture 3.2 Peer/family culture 3.3 Learning difficulty/emotional problem 3.4 Pastoral issue	3.5 Complexity of diagnosis 3.6 Conflicting pressures 3.7 Accessing external resources	3.8 Disapproval 3.9 Anxiety about schooling 3.10 Pressure of expectation

4.3.1 a) Year 9 Pupils

Participants in the pupil group interviews spoke positively of experiences in the classroom they had enjoyed or which had simply been funny. Often interactive approaches which encouraged debate, observation or peer-led activities appeared popular. Enjoyment came in particular from creative activities and humour from activities which had involved group work followed by some form of performance back

to the whole class. In the following thoughtful response the pleasure enjoyed in a peer-led activity is apparent:

We did a video about how the essays were planned which made it funny, but we still learnt all the stuff we could, so we could all get involved. But we learnt everything and remember it because it was funny. (Year 9 girl, School A, Theme 1.1)

There was, it seemed, an incentive to complete classwork quickly and the corresponding ability to remember the content better as a result of the fun that was had.

When you are under pressure in Art, you can kind of enjoy yourself when you are doing your painting even though you know you've got to get it done. (Year 9 girl, School A, Theme 1.1)

As a result of these findings the interview schedule was adapted so that there would be more of an emphasis in Study Two on classroom activity and the cognitive and emotional benefit of particular teaching approaches. The Study One analysis showed that there was scope to explore pupils' perceptions of the emotional warmth of the classroom experience and capacity of the teacher to aid memory of subject content. These were emerging as key facilitators of learning from the pupils' perspective. .

4.3.1 b) Staff

Staff at School C indicated that they were dealing with a minority of high achieving pupils for whom school was not enjoyable. This was for complex emotional reasons, often involving issues at home or in the relationship between the home and the school. The evidence that there was a Special Educational Needs dimension to this problem was strong, with a particular concern that Asperger's Syndrome and/or ASD behaviours were presenting. This corroborated some of the conclusions of Wallace (2010), Winstanley (2010b), Reis and McCoach (2013) and Montgomery (2010) who find that underachievement in gifted pupils can "mask more serious physical, cognitive or emotional issues" (Reis and McCoach 2013:2). Because of limited external resources and the scarcity of training for staff in this area, the SEN team had developed a growing body of professional knowledge in dealing with pupils of high ability with behaviours consistent with ASD.

(One of our LSAs) does not feel qualified, but he has a real feel for this area. He went and did some research on it. He has developed his own booklet on Asperger's. This helped to make it clear to other people. Things like non-eye-contact. The LA now uses this. He's flagged things like highly developed sensory perception.
(SENCO, School C, Theme 1.3)

Staff expressed their experience of managing such behaviours in emotional terms, in one case describing some of the scenarios as "frightening". (See Box 7.4 at Appendix 18 below.) They might also focus on episodes when a parent had behaved inappropriately towards their own child. (See Box 7.1 at Appendix 18.) This justified the inclusion in Study Two of the Centre Manager from the ASD specialist unit at School D. Viewed reflexively, these findings shed more light on the forms and purpose of emotional support provided by the school. It was decided to include more interviews focussed on key teaching and learning practices and their impact in Study Two.

4.3.1 c) Parents

Parents strongly approved of teaching which they considered conducive to their children's development. As one parent put it, "I want mental stimulation for him" (Parent, School C). They gave instances of lessons where they believed this had happened, naming the teacher concerned and singling him out for praise. They were dismissive of the National Curriculum – "You are working in the realms of the National Curriculum – which is restricting" (Parent, School C). This suggested an anxiety about the nature of the curriculum at the school and its appropriateness for their children. The impression was one of a desire for the school to take their children to a new level intellectually.

4.3.2 Key Theme Two: 'Pupil Support'

The aim of this part of the analysis was to assess the evidence for the type and level of support available to pupils with the potential to achieve highly, but either underperforming in a particular subject area or generally not thriving in the school environment. It sought to identify evidence for 'Pupil Support' as a Key Theme and Constituent Themes for further exploration in Study Two. The section concludes with a description of the changes made to Study Two interview schedules in light of the Study One findings.

4.3.2a) Year 9 Pupils

Here, the questions focussed on pupil perceptions of practice in the classroom and methods adopted by teachers to build confidence. Pupils appreciated one-to-one dialogue with the teacher as to how to improve the standard of their work. A consistent approach was favoured.

In Art, our teacher *always* comes round and tells us what is good and what we could *improve* on. And *every* piece of work we hand in, she *always* gives us a list of what we have done really well and then what we can *improve* on and then we can develop it and hand it in *again*.
(Year 9 girl, School A, Theme 2.1 – my emphasis)

The pupil's approval of this teacher's practice is implicit in the words "every", "always", "again" and repetition of the verb - each denoting thoroughness and clarity. This pupil knew where she stood in the subject and trusted the teacher to guide her towards an improved standard.

The next series of questions focussed interviewees on support provided by the school generally to help cope with negative experiences of the pressure to succeed in examinations. The aim of this section was to ascertain the degree to which the holistic model of gifted education associated with Hollingworth (1926 and 1942) was evident in day-to-day practice in the case study schools. More recent research focussed on the role of leadership and pastoral systems for supporting the highly able, such as Fitton (2010) and Stopper (2000), suggested this might be the case. Leyden (2010) too was particularly persuasive in correlating the particular risk to the highly able of failing to achieve potential with the need for "personal self-fulfilment" (op. cit.: 34) identified by Maslow (1954 and Appendix 2) in his seminal analysis of basic human needs. Interview responses indicated that there was indeed pressure, but elicited little on pupils' strategies for dealing with this. There was evidence that the drive to achieve target grades was an annoyance, but a corresponding awareness that the school was on hand to provide appropriate supports.

It's just annoying. We might think they [targets] are inaccurate maybe that they have set things too high for your ability. Everyone's target grades are like A*/A and we're like, whoops!
(Year 9 girl, School A, Theme 2.2)

We have a learning support area where if you are struggling with things or need to get organised there's a learning mentor who helps you get it all sorted. And if you are struggling in a particular subject they will sort out a tutor for you. (Year 9 girl, School A, Theme 2.1)

School A also appeared to have effective support in place in cases of stress, as this participant had discovered.

JIW: So at certain times it becomes an issue, but for most of the time you are just going on quite happily?

I do get very stressed out when exams are coming up because I always think I'm revising the wrong things and there's a bit that I've forgotten and I think the worst thing is that I don't have any way of dealing with it. I remember in Year 8 even though they are not that important I got in a major stress and had exhaustion and the school offered me pastoral care to help me with it.

(Year 9 girl, School A, Theme 2.2)

Performance data and teacher nomination both indicated that this pupil was predicted to achieve a minimum of 8 A* at GCSE. This appeared to corroborate the finding from staff at School C in Study One that a counselling style support system is an asset in ensuring that pressures on pupils do not inhibit enjoyment or achievement. This may especially be needed where the pupil may have developed fewer coping strategies.

4.3.2b) Staff

Participants at School C provided evidence of extensive work in counselling students experiencing stress owing to work pressures, but usually in the context of an underlying Special Educational Need or a complex domestic situation. Their responses suggested Pupil Support was indeed a valid area for investigation. They found that they were operating in a grey area between diagnosed needs such as ASD, ADHD or Asperger's Syndrome where external provision was minimal. In addition, such pupils were often highly able learners, but prone to behaviours which staff felt they were unqualified to address. Counselling was considered a key intervention. Relations with parents were also of critical importance, but potentially a part of the problem in resolving more deep-seated emotional or behavioural issues. This was particularly the

case when a parent might reject a referral to an external agency for emotional or mental health support.

We have found on more than one occasion that you will have a conversation with a parent and you can have notes from the meeting that this (Child Mental Health referral) will go ahead and they will withdraw because it looks quite frightening.
(School C, Theme 2.5)

The experience of staff over a period of time dealing with this complex area had led to two developments worthy of further investigation. Firstly, the emphasis on resources, such as rooming, in addressing Asperger's behavioural traits echoed the finding in Key Theme One that flexibility of practice was a key asset for support staff in these settings. Secondly, the provision of an environment in which pupils experiencing difficulty could feel safe and at home. The school appeared to need to provide a safe haven and even "a cup of tea" (LSA, School C, Theme 2.6) through these caring staff.

The ... role consists of supervision of the Study Room – it's a safe place for students to go at lunchtime for one-to-one mentoring and student support. Especially for the Asperger's boys, this is a space away from the noise and hustle and bustle of the Form room. They can play card games, eat food, play Dingbats...
(LSA, School C, Theme 2.6)

The nature of the support work described appeared supple, sensitive and responsive to the pupils' emotional needs, echoing the finding of Jackson (1998:220 quoted at 2.5.3, page 45) that effective high ability schooling should be sensitive to the emotional and environmental needs of students.

4.3.3 c) Parents

The parent Discussion Group at School C yielded positive responses to questions about the quality of for their high achieving sons. ("Mrs. H. is excellent. I know I could go to her if needed." Parent, School C, Theme 2.9). The group were also impressed at the speed and effectiveness with which bullying issues were dealt with. Anxieties expressed concerned the content of the curriculum, extra-curricular provision and their own role in supporting and extending their sons' learning. Such concerns were expressed as a desire for their sons to experience failure as a preparation for life after school.

They need to learn to fail from something that is safe – it is the learning from failure that will help more in the future.
(Parent, School C, Theme 2.10)

Concern about future prospects emerged sufficiently strongly to warrant establishing an additional theme – “Anxieties about the future” - for further investigation as a sub-theme in Study Two. Most notable here was the resonance with core texts from the Literature Review, especially Leyden’s (2010) thumbnails of risk averse pupils described variously as “conforming coasters and teacher pleasers” (op. cit. 38) and Winstanley’s (2010) cogent defence of the virtues of risk-taking in schools, without which “creative endeavour would not be possible and little change could occur” (op. cit. 78).

4.3.4 Key Theme Three: ‘Aspiration’

The quantity of data gained in response to Research Question Two justified a third Key Theme in the IPA analysis to reflect accurately concerns expressed by all three groups of participants. The purpose and effects of different assessment models were a preoccupation and apparent cause of stress in some cases. The identification of an “Aspiration” Key Theme enabled reflection on the purpose of assessment from the perspective of the participants and also the linkage with higher education and job prospects. Such a theme and associated findings also assisted in testing the hypothesis of Dore (1976), Stobart (2008) and Amrein and Berliner (2003) that “high stakes testing” leads to the “impoverishment of learning” (Stobart, op. cit.: 95). Assessment and aspiration were grouped together because of the conceptual link made commentators such as Dore (1976) and Stobart (2008) between “qualifications... and... job selection” (Stobart *ibid.*).

4.3.4a) Year 9 Pupils

Pupils revealed that they felt under pressure both from the school and their parents to achieve highly.

Do you ever feel under pressure to get really good results (from parents)?

They’re fine as long as I don’t fail. They prefer it if I get As or A*s and Bs rather than Cs.

(Year 9 girl, School A, Theme 2.3)

This was not regarded as a negative factor in their enjoyment of school: “They (the teachers) won’t, like, shout at you...” (Year 9 girl, School A). It appeared that they appreciated the reminder that they were in a “top...school” and that this provided the spur they felt they sometimes needed, but the kind of resilience or task commitment associated with giftedness and identified by Renzulli (1978 and 2005) and Sternberg (1984 and 2009) was presumably required for pupils to respond effectively. This supported the notion that the prevailing school culture towards grades should be investigated further, together with provision for learner qualities such as mindset (Dweck 2006).

Aspirations for careers were touched upon and revealed a diversity of opinion, sometimes favouring choices influenced more by pop-culture than ambitions to gain entry to top universities and the professions.

Well, whatever I watch I want to be. So if I watch *Wild at Heart* I want to be a vet, if I watch *Ugly Betty* I want to work in a fashion house. (Year 9 girl, School A, Theme 2.4)

This theme pointed up the contrast between pupils’ own longer term aspirations and those of the school and, to an extent, the family. A reflexive note was made to orientate Study Two towards an investigation of the potential for parent-child conflict over academic or career aspiration.

4.3.4b) Staff

Staff participants revealed that in supporting pupils who experienced pressures or difficulties they felt they were in the middle ground between parents aspiring highly for their children and the children themselves. A counsellor who was interviewed captured the dilemma of children who were struggling to fulfil parental expectation, despite apparently trying their best to do so:

This is a high achieving school – they are well aware of that. They are well aware that they should be achieving really good things. And they worry about it. They are doing 100% effort, but somehow they think they should be doing much more than that. So I experiment with them – can you really do more than that? And they say, “Do you know what? I can’t!” It’s like a light coming on. As soon as they let go of that – they tend to enjoy it more.”
(Counsellor, School C, Theme 2.8)

Unless similar, appropriate supports are put in place, the consequences for the self-esteem and general well-being for pupils in this position can be serious.

Is there a stigma (about mental health referral)?

I think – a little bit of a stereotype – the higher achieving parents we have think it's going to appear on UCAS or stop them going to Oxbridge - which is obviously not true.
(SENCO, School C, Theme 2.7)

Staff perceived that parents were sometimes reluctant to engage fully with the supports available because of the perceived risk to their child's longer term prospects.

4.3.4c) Parents

The expectation of parents in the Discussion Group was clear and definitive.

What are your expectations (for your son)?

A*s; As and A*s; realistically I would expect nothing less than a B. If they have aspirations to go to university, then the GCSE results count. (Parent, School C, Theme 2.10)

Study Two would explore the degree of negotiation between parent and child about examination grades. The reflexive view taken was that it was necessary to probe the how schools mediate between parent and child, especially where there is an imbalance between their respective aspirations.

4.3.5 Key Theme Four: 'Potential Inhibitors'

This theme emerged from a section in the interviews which focussed on Research Question Three and aspects of pupils' experience of schooling which might inhibit the fulfilment of potential. Responses indicated a range of factors largely to do with the culture of the school or the peer group. Of particular note were the references to cultures in other schools which both pupils and parents looked upon negatively. This suggested that a degree of faith had been placed in all the schools in question to nurture high achieving pupils effectively and not permit them to succumb to peer pressure to deviate from a commitment to learning and achievement. The implication appears to have been that although it was tough in the existing school environment and standards extremely high, the alternative would be disastrous to longer term prospects

and the fulfilment of potential. The Key Theme was adapted early on in the analysis by qualifying “Inhibitors” to “Potential Inhibitors” to allow for this ambiguity to be expressed. What appeared challenging on the surface might actually prove a good thing in the achievement of outstanding results at GCSE and beyond.

4.3.5a) Year 9 Pupils

Pupils were aware that they had a potentially negative image with peers elsewhere.

What about their (pupils at other schools) attitude to you?

I would guess that sometimes it would be OK, but other times it will be ‘Oh, she’s smarter than us – so you can’t be around us anymore, because we are happy where we are . We don’t want to be boffins.”
(Year 9 girl, School A, Theme 3.1)

They realised that they were being set more work outside of school.

I live in MS and my friends get my bus and ... one time we were talking about homework and I told them about mine and they were like “Bloody hell!”

Does it make you feel good that you’ve got that kind of homework here?

No – it shows I haven’t got a life! (Year 9 girl, School A, Theme 3.1)

The tone of voice on this extract (discernible on the audio-file) suggested a grudging pride in being different from the mainstream. This was self-deprecating humour, rather than a statement of the pupil’s relative well-being.

Other emergent themes included the impression that parents were aware of the pressures their children were experiencing and were supportive.

My parents just say to do your very best and they don’t put me under pressure. They just try and help me if I am under pressure. They would just help me and help me through it.

(Year 9 girl, School A, Theme 3.2)

This contrasted with the finding from the parent Discussion Group above which gave the impression of a tougher stance (e.g. “... realistically I would expect nothing less than a B”). Pupils also gave a positive appraisal of the supports the school had in place.

As already indicated, they recognised stress (at exam time in particular) as a potential obstacle, but were positive about the school's ability to deal with this.

4.3.5b) Staff

Inhibitors identified by Staff focussed very much on needs arising from emotional or even learning difficulties. The concern was expressed that resources were in short supply – for example, Educational Psychologists – and that the school's capacity to resolve more complex issues was limited.

There might be slightly different needs – much more on an emotional level. Sometimes it's behavioural – but those students still need support – especially the ones that I think could actually go on to cause themselves or other people harm... Something that's come out over the last year is the increasing number of students self-harming.
(SENCO, School C, Theme 3.5)

All staff participants gave the impression that this was a complex area requiring good levels of understanding by themselves and staff more widely. Their perspective on pupil-parent relations and the impact – positive and negative – this had on schooling merited further investigation in Study Two.

4.3.5c) Parents

Parent responses analysed in this Theme were clouded by anxieties about their son's experiences in school currently. They expressed a candid self-doubt in working out how to support without exerting undue pressure.

Do you feel the pressure?

Yes I do – the pressure is on. You have to drive a little bit too – they are so young that they may not feel it. However, you are trying to drive it. What can I do? Should I push more?
(Parent, School C, Theme 3.10)

It seemed that they were putting pressure on themselves to ensure their sons succeeded in achieving high academic results. Their sons however might not share this anxiety:

Because they are quite bright – my son often says why do I need to revise? We even look at his c.v. now – extra-curricular – playing an

instrument... Why is that so important? It makes their UCAS form stand out. (Parent, School C, Theme 3.9)

A sense of grievance was evident if their child appeared to have been wrongly marked in his school work. One noted that “he got marked wrongly in an exam that was actually correct and it is guarding against that sort of thing” (Parent, School C, Theme 3.8). The aspiration for the child led to a loss of the trust in the school’s processes if these implied that aspirations might be in some way threatened.

4.4 Comparative analysis of themed findings from Study One

Interview responses from the Study One fieldwork lent themselves to the IPA method of analysis. This produced a clustering effect which highlighted the salient issues in schooling for high achievement. In addition, it surfaced the cross-currents of classroom experience, institutional approaches to pupil support, academic pressures driven by high parental and school aspiration and the negative effects of some forms of peer pressure. IPA analysis was beneficial in aiding interpretation of the mass of disparate data which emerged from the interviews. From a reflexive viewpoint, IPA in the context of this investigation had been successfully trialled and had suggested themes which were beginning to shape the evaluative phase of the report process. In the case of Research Question Two, on experiences which affect the achievement and wellbeing of high achieving pupils, it was decided to present the findings under two distinct themes – Pupil Support and Aspiration – as a means of managing and capturing the wealth of data which came out of the interviews.

IPA also enabled a nuanced perspective to emerge from participants’ first-hand experience of education for high achievement. For pupils it appeared that the *quality* of the experience in the classroom was critical. The opportunity to enjoy a particular activity and have fun was regarded as a major aid to learning. There was an emphasis on performance and creativity – both of which helped pupils remember lesson content much more readily. Peer culture could obstruct this process, whilst family and school cultures on the whole were helpful. The focus on grades and targets was considered irksome, but necessary and not an inhibitor.

Staff views were somewhat slanted towards pupil support, especially emotional and behavioural, because of the make-up of the interview sample. They had often

developed their own resources from experiential knowledge of a complex range of issues. Inhibitors identified by staff included underlying, but undiagnosed, Special Educational Needs, lack of pupil resilience and poor relations between parent and child over schooling. Limited external agency support was also a concern, for example in the provision of Educational Psychologists and opportunities for SEN networking (as evidenced in School C interview with LSA1 and also at Appendix 20).

Parents' views may have been skewed by the nature of the Discussion Group, which was large and difficult for the researcher to manage. Responses were expressed as polarised opinions about the necessity for top quality grades, outstanding extra-curricular opportunities and teaching which both challenged and provided opportunities for failure. Provided grades in the end were predominantly A* or A they would not be disappointed. Study Two sought to improve technique in carrying out the fieldwork, especially interviews and, in doing so, deepen understanding of the pilot data, facilitate further cross-referencing with the literature and validate the preliminary findings from Study One.

Chapter 5 – Analysis and Interpretation of Results from four Case Studies (Study Two)

5.1 Introduction

Interviews were conducted in all four case study schools, following amendment of the interview schedules. IPA analysis of the transcripts from Study Two identified a wider range of Constituent Themes because of the greater amount of data and allowed for clarification of the findings from Study One. Where overlap occurred between the two studies, this helped to enhance the validity and reliability of the findings overall. There was sufficient variety and depth by comparison that the decision to undertake a second study was vindicated. IPA spread-sheets were utilised in the first instance to organise and code data from the interviews. (See Appendix 14 for example.) Themes arising in Study Two tended to mirror those in Study One, but were enriched by the greater level of detail provided by the analysis of the new set of transcripts. The thematic headings illustrated in Tables 5.1-4 later in this chapter emerged from the IPA process were used to structure preliminary analysis of the findings. It was found that this method again aided efficient characterisation of the preoccupations and concerns of each of the participating groups from a mass of potentially conflicting data. The aim was to assess the degree of alignment or variance between pupils, staff and parents about effective ways of fulfilling high academic potential.

Seven group interviews with pupils took place, three in each of case study Schools B and C and one in School D. They consisted of the Special Educational Needs Coordinator, the School Counsellor and two Learning Support Assistants. In all three other Case Study schools - Schools A,B and D - the Headteacher was interviewed, together with two Deputy Headteachers in School B who had responsibility for pastoral care and Gifted and Talented provision respectively and the Gifted and Talented Coordinators in Schools A and D. In addition, the Manager of the Asperger's Unit - 'The Base' - at School D was also interviewed. In total, seven one-to-one interviews were conducted with staff. Six of these were recorded and transcribed as above for pupils. The seventh interview - with the Gifted and Talented Coordinator at

School D - was conducted by telephone and also recorded electronically with the participant's consent.

5.2 Description of the Key and Constituent Themes from Study Two

Because of the greater number of interviews, a refinement was made in Study Two to each of the Key Themes around which the data was grouped. In the case of Key Theme One, the Teaching and Learning Theme which arose from Study One analyses was adapted on the basis of the evidence emerging about what worked best in the classroom at a range of levels, including the cognitive and emotional. Hence, the Key Theme arising in this instance was 'Facilitators of Learning amongst Potential High Achievers'. In the case of the Pupil Support Theme (Key Theme Two in Study One), the emphasis in many responses on strategic, system-wide approaches was sufficiently prominent for this to become 'School Systems'. Thirdly, responses focussed on longer term aspiration in examination or career terms, revealed anxiety about non-fulfilment of academic expectations, especially on the part of parents. This prompted adaptation of the Study One Theme to 'Aspiration and Anxiety'. Finally, the nature and type of inhibitors in the fourth Key Theme crystallised around institutional factors at school and cultural factors resulting from the friendship group. These were counter-balanced by references to positive factors in the behaviour of a teacher or the school's approach. This, Key Theme Four became 'Institutional and Cultural Facilitators and Inhibitors'. The parent data in this last section was insufficiently conclusive to be included.

5.2.1 Key Theme One: 'Facilitators of Learning amongst Potential High Achievers'

Constituent themes which clustered around teaching and learning in Study Two, derived largely from experiences pupil participants shared about Classroom Experience (Theme 1.1), the Influence of the Teacher (Theme 1.2) and Resources (Theme 1.3). Interviews with school leadership yielded insights into vision Headteachers had in particular to provide for potential high achievers (Theme 1.4), the curriculum structures they had put in place to achieve this (Theme 1.5) and the prevailing school culture and its conduciveness to high achievement, as observed by parents (Theme 1.6).

Table 5.1 Overview of Key Theme and Constituent Theme relationship for Research Question One, derived from IPA analysis of Study Two interview data

RQ	Key Theme	Constituent theme	Emerging Constituent themes				Source data
1	Experience of Teaching and Learning	1. Facilitators of learning amongst Potential High Achievers	1.1	Classroom experience	1.1a	Activity/Content	Pupil group interviews
					1.1b	Positive cognitive/emotional effect	
			1.2	Influence of Teacher	1.2a	Teacher behaviour	
					1.2b	Challenges conventions	
					1.2c	Classroom activity	
			1.3	Resources	1.3a	Use of Technology	Staff 1:1 interviews
			1.4	Vision	1.4a	Headteacher Vision/School Mission	
					1.4b	Evidence of strategic approach	
			1.5	Curriculum design	1.5a	Teaching, Learning – whole school focus	
					1.5b	Personal Development and Wellbeing	
			1.6	School Culture	1.6a	Approval/disapproval of curriculum content and delivery	Parent Focus Group
					1.6b	Relationships which aid/inhibit learning	
					1.6c	Expectations – academic and personal	
					1.6d	Sense of academic/personal fulfilment	

5.2.2 Analysis of Constituent Themes in Key Theme One

The correlation between Research Question One and the themes which emerged from the transcript analysis is illustrated in Table 5.1 (previous page).

5.2.2a) Year 9 Pupils

For pupils, a variety of content and activity in lessons appeared vital in ensuring that learning takes place. Fun and enjoyment were strongly favoured, as was

evident in Study One, but ownership, improvisation, investigation and problem-solving all met with approval.

Some of our drama lessons ... I have always enjoyed doing improvisation rather than scripted things ... such as the pantomime.

Was this for a show?

No just an in class thing. A pantomime thing – it was atrocious, but fun! ... Making up everything because we had to make up storylines, the characters, we had to come up what props we were going to do. We had to start from scratch. (Year 9 boy, School B, Theme 1.1a)

The kind of “novelty” identified by Winstanley (2010b) as a key “ingredient of challenge” were also favoured, as in this Drama lesson:

It’s another Drama lesson and it was not long ago and we were working on Blood Brothers and I remember it so well I can even remember some of the lines in it and one of the final scenes where they were about to kill each other and I can remember acting it out. (Year 9 girl, School D, Theme 1.1b)

The frequency of the word “remember” and cognates is notable. Pupils seemed to want to remember vividly particular activities as a key to learning the underlying content. This form of shock might also come in the form intellectual challenge. In this instance pupils are discovering a teacher’s apparent commitment to an untenable moral position.

Our RE teacher will always make it a challenging lesson ... and he will keep arguing with us... for example he said the Holocaust was not racist - he doesn’t agree with that, but it was because he wanted to challenge us and see how we would structure our arguments. (Year 9 boy, School C, Theme 1.2a)

Thus, teacher behaviour and the ability to challenge conventions emerged as subsets of Constituent Theme 1.2, ‘Influence of Teacher’ and suggested a picture of pupils hungry to learn and receptive to challenging or memorable lesson management. Effective teachers, from the pupils’ perspective, could be unorthodox on the one hand, but must be controlled and conducive to good order in the classroom simultaneously.

We were talking about earlier the Drama one where we were improvising and our teacher Mr. S, said something about we were on X Factor and he started singing and dancing and it makes it

memorable because it is really weird – you remember exactly what you were doing because it was interesting.
(Year 9 girl, School D, Theme 1.2b)

One teacher we had was brilliant because he would be friendly and funny but he was also quite strict. So when he was having a laugh, then you could have a laugh... So everyone respected him whilst working and had fun at other times... Yes, you need to have a boundary. (Year 9 boy, School C, Theme 1.2a)

Finally, strong approval was expressed for lessons involving tactile or kinaesthetic activity. Sometimes this might require use of additional resources, such as clay in Art or the Interactive Whiteboard elsewhere, but these were clearly viewed as facilitators. Art, Drama, Dance, Technology and PE were referenced as positive classroom experiences – see Box 6.1 in Appendix 17. This appears to confirm the premise quoted by Montgomery (2009c) that “there is no true giftedness without creativity” (op. cit.: 131) and that all pupils, and especially the potential high achiever, should be afforded every opportunity to experience and develop it.

5.2.2b) Staff

All three Headteachers interviewed expressed statements of vision about the place of provision for high achievers in their schools’ mission (Theme 1.4a). The strategic approaches they had adopted so that provision was appropriate and effective was varied. At School D the conventional Gifted and Talented identification model was in operation, although due to be phased out. Here a small group of potential high achievers identified through performance data such as Key Stage 2 SAT levels had been given a special programme overseen by a Coordinator. At School A a school-wide programme of specialist individual academic projects had been constructed, also led by a Coordinator as a developmental leadership role. This encompassed the whole school population, but enabled focus on high achieving “Apex” group who would be expected to present their work and have it judged by senior members of staff. School B was committed to a similar school-wide approach with opportunities for high achievers to attend extension sessions at a local university. Lastly, School C made the assumption that all pupils were intrinsically gifted and talented and ran an adapted curriculum to provide for this. This entailed a significant amount of GCSE work in middle years, but

no public examination before Year 11 (Theme 1.4b). A notable feature of all responses was the dilemma faced by Headteachers in adapting provision for the gifted, whilst retaining an inclusive ethos.

That's not necessarily to put in particular provision for higher attaining students, but to get more students higher attaining... And through that and through all that we do with our students we aim to get as many students as we can high attaining and that can mean their academic work, or their sports or music or their drama.
(Headteacher, School B, Theme 1.4b)

Three of the case study schools seemed to exploit the fact that there was a high concentration of potential high achievers in their schools and adapt the provision for all pupils. As one said, "everyone will be involved at the first level" (Headteacher, School A, Theme 1.5a). Although the term 'Gifted and Talented' was used, only School D had anything structural in place which resembled the original NAGTY model of a Coordinator-led programme for a selection of pupils from the top end of the ability range (Campbell et al. 2004). Several responses indicated that the overall quality and pitch of teaching and learning in the school was the prime consideration, together with a desire not to single individuals out for special treatment, possibly with negative consequences for the child concerned (Theme 1.5b).

... by the time you get to the final [level], they are mostly Apex [i.e. Gifted and Talented] students at that point...they can do it [the presentation on their academic focus] in an all-embracing peer environment. They feel great about it.
(Headteacher, School A, Theme 1.5a)

They feel celebrated for being the best rather than isolated and outside their peer group.
(Headteacher, School A, Theme 1.5b)

Headteachers it seemed were balancing the academic needs of potential high achievers against the possibly adverse effect of a purely elitist approach. As one said, "I don't think high expectations and high achievement are necessarily exclusive of happiness" (Headteacher, School B, Theme 1.5b).

5.2.2c) *Parents*

Parents' attitudes to the school and its capacity to ensure their children achieve their potential can be summarised as a combination of high expectation, a thirst for information and concern about peer influence. They disapproved of the National Curriculum, as also evidenced in Study One findings above, and approved of teaching which was inspirational and took their children "to a different place" (Parent, School C, Theme 1.6a). There appeared to be a parent-pupil dialogue which sometimes reassured, but occasionally exacerbated concerns.

We've had a few ups and downs. This year ... I don't know if he's a typical 14 year old boy, but he believes in doing his homework the night before it's due rather than when it's set.... I feel the one area where Billy has struggled, is understanding what it means to revise. He can do consistently well during the year, but when it comes to exams he underachieves slightly because he doesn't set himself out a revision plan. (Parent, School C, Theme 1.6a/c)

Parents were anxious to know what was going on at school and would appreciate "a curriculum map". There seemed to be a sense that the child would perform better if associating with other pupils of whom the parent approved. Evidence for Theme 1.6d suggested that the parent perceived that her son was "more comfortable because there are likeminded children around him" (Parent, School C, Theme 1.6d). This appeared to corroborate Freeman (2008) who finds that "when highly able children are grouped together for teaching, they make better progress in their school work" (op. cit. 5) and argues on emotional grounds against the separation or acceleration of gifted children in ways which isolate them from the peer group to a significant degree. Winstanley (2010b) too apparently supports the parental view expressed here, noting that:

... Working with like-minded peers with similar ability and motivation levels ... can bring the palpable sense of relief that comes from sharing enthusiasms, identifying with others and no longer feeling alone. (Winstanley 2010b: 113)

5.2.3 Key Theme Two: 'School Systems'

This part of the analysis sought to find out from participants' responses what their experience had been of the school's provision for potential high achievers. The interview schedule for pupils had focussed on the issue of support because Research Question Two asked what experiences were likely to affect pupil wellbeing or achievement. It was found that pupils had little awareness of the gifted and talented programme as such and, if they did, it was viewed negatively. Approaches developed by the schools themselves appeared to work more effectively; hence Constituent Themes 2.1 and 2.2 emerged to illustrate this dichotomy. Senior staff had different approaches to the organisation of resources and showed in their response a preoccupation with structure and the need to balance scarce resources (Themes 2.3 and 2.4). All were committed to the fulfilment of potential in all pupils, including the high achiever but inclusive standpoints sometimes conflicted with this. Apart from anxieties expressed elsewhere about the need to know in more detail about their children's experience at school, parents interviewed expressed extreme relief at the fact their children were in schools which they felt specialised in bringing out high academic achievement without negative peer culture pressures, as experienced it seemed at primary school (Theme 2.5).

5.2.4 Analysis of Constituent Themes in Key Theme Two

The correlation between the Research Question Two and the themes which emerged from the transcript analysis is illustrated in Table 5.2 (overleaf).

5.2.4a) Year 9 Pupils

Participants appeared negative about programmes which singled them out in any way or accelerated entry to GCSE examinations. Disaffection with the Gifted and Talented programme in one case study school stemmed from the lack of activity after identification. The matter appeared to have been left hanging or at best been given lip-service.

Table 5.2 Overview of Key Theme and Sub-theme relationship for Research Question Two, derived from IPA analysis of Study Two interview data

RQ	Key Theme	Constituent Theme	Emergent Constituent Themes				Source data
2	Pupil Support	2. School systems	2.1	Strategic programme for Potential High Achievers	2.1a	Positive/negative experience of whole school programme	Pupil group interviews
					2.1b	Development of self-managing learners	
			2.2	Local approaches to securing High Achievement	2.2a	Efficacy at pupil level	
					2.2b	Pupil reflection	
					2.2c	Experience of extra-curricular activities	
			2.3	Management structure	2.3a	Allocation and prioritisation of resources	Staff 1:1 interviews
					2.3b	Response to national policy change/ international research reports	
			2.4	Embedding vision for High Achievers	2.4a	Evidence of underlying philosophy	
			2.5	Perception of quality of provision for high achievers	2.5a	Anxiety/approval	Parent Focus Group
					2.5b	Value judgements based on comparative experiences elsewhere	

They say you are gifted and talented, but they don't build on that more, they just say that and leave it.
(Year 9 girl, School D, Theme 2.1a)

It's not a case of different work; it's a case of more work.
(Year 9 boy, School C, Theme 2.1a)

On accelerated GCSEs, this pupil had strongly negative views, with one going so far as to describe it as "pathetic and ... crazy" because of the additional, unnecessary pressure it created (Year 9 girl, School D, Theme 2.1a).

Pupils in Study Two also went into more depth about the strategies they used to help prepare for examinations or deal with homework. They had the ability, it seemed, to manage their own learning. They showed themselves often to be adept at managing "downtime" in a way which was organised, eased pressure and allowed time for leisure. They revealed an overriding concern to get homework done and to do so quickly and efficiently.

They appeared reflective about their academic strengths and weaknesses and if anything played down their ability, as here:

There are quite a few people who are very, very good at Maths. I'm not one of them. (Year 9 boy, School C, Theme 2.1b)

I think I'm probably just a bit arrogant – which I think helps. If people kind of think I will get this and this and that – I probably will. Unless it's French. (Year 9 boy, School C, Theme 2.1b)

They seemed to find work in groups a support in itself, because "it's friendly and it pushes people further". The schemes two of the case study schools had in place to provide senior students as mentors also met with approval, with pupils able to articulate clearly why it was this succeeded. As one pupil explained, mentors "really help", even if you are "quite good, you can learn a lot" and "you're not really afraid of saying what you really want to say" (Year 9 boy, School B, Theme 2.2a).

Negative views were expressed however about some of the problems apparently encountered if activities outside the classroom are volunteered for:

Some people don't want to do it because it happens a lot because say if you go into something extra, you are then called a 'bodrick'. You are teased about it and you get more afraid of doing it because of what people will say. (Year 9 girl, School D, Theme 2.1a)

On balance, positive experiences of extra-curricular activities outweighed the negative by a considerable degree.

5.2.4b) Staff

The pressure on Headteachers wishing to organise resources efficiently at a time of economic stringency and at the same time get best value out of the management structure had led to the demise of the free-standing Gifted and Talented Coordinator of the NAGTY model in School D.

We weren't going to give a TLR (management allowance) for that (G and T) any more, we were actually going to put the TLR into Intervention, but more so for the C/D borderline. So we don't actually have a Gifted and Talented Coordinator as from this year... (ex-Gifted and Talented Coordinator, School D, Theme 2.3 a/b)

This extract also alludes to the risk of imposed inspection and forced school status conversion if floor targets of 40% A*-C GCSE grades were not achieved following publication of the 2010 White Paper (DfE 2010). Hence the priority in academic terms ahead had moved from potential high achievement to the elimination of D grades at GCSE.

5.2.4c) Parents

Parents' responses reflected some of the preoccupations of the pupils. The parents in the Focus Group at School C were those of two of the boys interviewed. They expressed a wish not to stand out from the crowd, or at least could sympathise with other parents of high achieving children if they did not wish to.

I think there's the other group (of parents) where you've got a child who's come from a primary school where they stand out very obviously from everyone else and they feel very self-conscious about it – almost don't want to be noticed because they are different. And I think in that case it's good to encourage those parents and say, "Look it's fine ... don't be embarrassed that your child is a high achiever." (Parent, School C, Theme 2.5b)

The focus on support had shifted in these interviews from school provision to a parental perception that it was more socially acceptable for them as well as their children to achieve highly in a school setting where this was an aspirational norm.

5.2.5 Key Theme Three: 'Aspiration and Anxiety'

Analysis of the transcripts revealed a number of concerns on the part of all participants centred on anxiety about present performance and how this impacted on aspirations for future higher education and career options. For pupils, evidently aware of the high expectations placed upon them both by the school and their parents, the focus was on high achievement (Theme 3.1). Whilst it was clear that they shared experience of pressure on both sides – from parents and school – they themselves were ambitious to achieve as many top grades as was possible. Aspiration for higher education varied markedly, with Oxbridge a given in some contexts and rather sketchy ideas evident in others (Theme 3.2). A strong trend emerged from analysis of transcripts of staff interviews suggesting different approaches to assessment – some allied specifically to fulfilment of high academic potential across the board, others less focussed and driven by political realities such as floor targets (Theme 3.3). Staff also appreciated the pressure to aspire for their highest achievers to aim high in HE terms, but understood that much groundwork had to be done in some cases to raise awareness in the first instance and then to generate the necessary social and cultural capital which was sometimes lacking (Theme 3.4). Where the demographic of the schools was relatively mixed – Schools A, B and D – there were more formal approaches to HE and careers guidance. Headteachers in particular demonstrated a strong commitment to promote social mobility and pathways to professional careers (Theme 3.5). Parents revealed anxieties about their children's academic and personal development (Themes 3.6/7), suggesting that it was interwoven with the high expectations they had of their children's academic capability. They were often at a loss as to know how to involve themselves effectively without impeding their child's development.

But then I want him to be a free-thinker and go the direction he wants as well. So, it's very hard to get that balance between, "Yes,

I want to push you through your education, but to what end?" ...
and to let him come up with his reasons.
(Parent Focus Group, School C, Themes 3.6a/3.7a)

This recalled Goodall's (2012) objective account of "authoritative parenting" (referenced in Chapter Two) as a prime factor in securing high levels of pupils engagement and achievement at school and her particular finding that:

... Parenting is not a static activity, nor is it one that can be easily described or categorised ... Rather, it is a dynamic enterprise, which needs constant negotiation and re-invention on the part of parents, as they respond to changes in the child and in the environment.
(Goodall 2012: 13)

What emerged here was the sense that this vital process of re-negotiation and readjustment was also emotional and potentially rather painful for the parent. This may also have been a result the child's growing need for autonomy and the element of 'letting-go' this entailed – both of the child's youthful self or even aspects of the parental persona.

5.2.6 Analysis of Constituent Themes in Key Theme Three

The correlation between Research Question Two and the second set of themes which emerged in response to it, centred on "aspiration", is illustrated in Table 5.3 (overleaf).

5.2.6a) Year 9 Pupils

There was little doubt about the academic aspiration of the pupils interviewed. Whilst there was a high degree of unanimity about the attitude of all the schools in the case studies, at least from the perspective of the pupils, there was more ambivalence about the attitude of parents. Most found them supportive and understanding, although a minority sensed the possibility of shared disappointment.

My parents will be disappointed if I got D, but my sister hasn't done her GCSEs yet but she is predicted A*s in all her subjects and sort of like I am in her shadows and I have high expectations and there is a point where I will be very disappointed if I do not get an A*..
(Year 9 boy, School C, Theme 3.1a/b)

Table 5.3 Overview of Key Theme and Sub-theme relationship for Research Question Two (“Aspiration”), derived from Study Two interview data

RQ	Key Theme	Constituent Theme	Emergent Constituent Themes				Source data
2	Aspiration	3 Aspiration and Anxiety	3.1	Focus on high achievement	3.1a	Expectations – grades	Pupil group interviews
					3.1b	Family influence (in-school)	
					3.1c	School influence (academic)	
			3.2	Higher Education and training	3.2a	Expectations – life-plan	
					3.2b	Family influence (outside of school)	
					3.2c	School influence (careers)	
			3.3	Assessment	3.3a	Assessment regime and target-setting	Staff 1:1 interviews
					3.3b	Identification model for Potential High Achievers	
					3.3c	Evidence of personalisation	
			3.4	Higher Education	3.4a	Expectation and destinations	
					3.4b	Promotion of social and cultural capital	
					3.4c	Social and cultural capital	
			3.5	Career Path	3.5a	Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG)	
					3.5b	Evidence of commitment to social mobility	
			3.6	Anxiety (Personal Development)	3.6a	Expectations	Parent Focus Group
					3.6b	Parental understanding and empathy	
			3.7	Anxiety (Academic Achievement)	3.7a	Expectations	
					3.7b	Parental involvement	

My parents just wanted me to be happy with whatever career I chose and left it up to me to choose. (Year 9 boy, School B, Theme 3.2b)

Regarding prospects beyond school, there was some variation in the responses. Some were very focussed on a particular route, such as engineer training. In this case this had also determined the choice of GCSE (Theme 3.2c). Elsewhere the view was expressed by another pupil that “my parents are pretty relaxed about it...” (Year 9 boy, School C).

5.2.6b) Staff

From the schools’ leadership perspective, concern for individuals of high academic potential appeared to be balanced by the concern for the progress and performance of particular cohorts. The view expressed by the Deputy in School B was indicative of the stance of the three selective schools participating in the case studies, namely adherence to a programme with a focus on “about 75% of the Year Group” capable of predominantly A/A* at GCSE: “Whilst the majority of work goes on with A*-A and B-A, it also focuses on eliminating any grades below a C.” (Deputy Headteacher, School B, Theme 3.3a). Associated with mainstream monitoring was the technique for identification of the gifted and talented. One Headteacher vocalised the misgivings about identification noted in the literature review (Chapter Two).

So there’s no artificial 10%, as it were, as was popular with the government a few years ago. It’s about: “Well who are they? Great if I’ve got 30 of them! Brilliant! But if I’ve got 5 – OK I’ll work with them!” (Headteacher, School A, Theme 3.3b)

Structured attempts to personalise provision were also evident as a theme focussed on tailored monitoring and assessment emerged from the transcripts: “We do termly data captures for progress and achievement ... We pick the consistently top performers and they receive targeted intervention.” Deputy Headteacher, School B, Theme 3.3c).

The perspective of senior leaders on Aspiration in general was that they felt it incumbent on them to provide the necessary social and cultural capital needed to enhance self-confidence and raise expectation. As one said, “It would be fanciful to say

when they come into Year 7 that it is an equal playing field, it's not." (Headteacher, School B, Theme 3.4a-b). He added that whilst many of those pupils and their families might have material advantages which might aid longer term prospects, others might not have the opportunity to "talk about politics around dinner" (Headteacher, School B, Theme 3.4a-b). A similar approach was advocated by a fellow Headteacher at School A: "We are the culture of aspiration for them..." (Headteacher, School A, Theme 3.4b).

The same two Headteachers also indicated that provision for high academic achievers in this area should be no different than for other pupils. As one put it, "What advice should they get and not other students?" (Headteacher, School B, Theme, 3.5a). A further comment suggested that all schools could provide a service to all pupils aspiring for high level careers by tackling the "lack of honesty" about what is required to enter a particular career. His argument was that the minimum requirement, for example in this case 5 A*-C at GCSE is never really sufficient (Headteacher, School B, Theme, 3.5a-b).

5.2.6c) Parents

The anxieties emerging from the Focus Group session provide further evidence for the notion that the very aspiration which motivated their support for their children's education was at the same time itself a source of anxiety. Their high expectations were balanced by high levels of understanding and empathy. One parent, in the telephone interview was convinced of her daughter's ability to do well – "I believe she is capable of doing it ... she can still do all As and A*s" (Parent, School D, Theme 3.6a). Elsewhere parents said they would be disappointed if their children did not "get into university" (Parent, School C, Theme 3.7a). Another in School C admitted that she didn't "want him turning off and ... rebelling against the pressure", so had adopted a "hands off" approach (Parent, School C, Theme 3.6b). This dilemma was best captured in the same Focus Group, by the parent who stated that she wanted her son "be a free-thinker and go in the direction he wants", but that it was "very hard to get the balance between, yes, I want to push you through your education, but to what end?" (Parent, School C, Theme 6.b). A final theme emerged from several expressions of frustration about the unclear boundary between their own involvement and that of

the school. In one case this was centred on homework issues, in another on the school's decision to enter pupils for GCSE early (Parents at School C and School D, Theme 7.b). These constituent themes appeared to emerge from a sense that although the children concerned might be expected to achieve highly, this did not diminish the sense of anxiety experienced by all parents of teenagers.

5.2.7 Key Theme Four: 'Institutional and Cultural Facilitators and Inhibitors'

Regarding inhibitors to potential high achievement, those aspects of school and peer culture which might obstruct high performance were considered next. The focus sought in the analysis for Key Theme Four was experience of life outside of the classroom and even outside of the school. The stimulus for Research Question Three on what teachers need to know to maximise achievement amongst these pupils was provided by: Francis' et al. (2010) study of pupils who seek to maintain the precarious balance between academic success and social acceptance; Goodall (2012), Grolnick and Ryan (1989) and Mazzoli (2006b) on the influence of parents; Leyden (2010), Freeman (1990 and 2008), Fitton (2010), Wallace et al. (2010), Montgomery (2009a and 2009b), Stopper (2000) and Winstanley (2010) on the central importance of school cultures in promoting high achievement and aspiration.

Evidence that social pressures could be obstructive emerged alongside the largely positive views expressed about pupils' experience of their school's mainstream culture, its sub-cultures, the peer-group and family influences (Themes 4.1/2/3). Pupils were in a good position to comment because of their immediate experience of their schools' prevailing culture, but also because of their experience of the sub-culture and peer influences in this context. Their social network and recent primary school experience also afforded comparative insights into cultures elsewhere. It was found in interviews with pupils that a commitment to study and achieve highly was met with widely varying degrees of social acceptability by peers. In this context peers might include pupils of the same age attending a different school. These findings supported Francis et al. (2010) in her contention that teachers under-estimate the skill and ingenuity of pupils who successfully the social and the academic in their lives. There was evidence that the family and even the wider community had an influence on the

capacity for pupils to achieve, bearing out the findings of Grolnick and Ryan (1989) and Goodall (2012) most notably. In this part of the analysis, data from parent Focus Group and the telephone interview with the parent at School D were telling because of the insights they offered about social pressures amongst parents themselves.

Often the school's perspective on the prevailing culture coincided with that of the pupils, but this was not always the case (Themes 4.4/5). Findings for the critical relationship between school and parents in sustaining and supporting high achievement were grouped under a further final theme (Theme 4.6). This section concludes with a comparative study of pupil and school perspectives and a summative discussion of the findings overall.

5.2.8 Analysis of Constituent Themes in Key Theme Four

The correlation between Research Question Three and the set of themes around "potential inhibitors" which emerged from the transcript analysis is illustrated in Table 5.4 (overleaf).

5.2.8a) Year 9 Pupils

The group interviews with pupils offered insights into their experience of a peer culture which, even in high achieving schools, might not always be supportive of high achievement. The impression in three of the schools was that whilst voices might be heard which almost celebrated low achievement, these were in the minority.

I think there is a realisation, the people who do well in school are going to have a better future than those who are, like, "I'm cool - yeah - I got 14% in Maths..." Who cares?
(Year 9 boy, School C, Theme 4.1a)

If anything, a dismissive attitude to schooling and good results was disapproved of by the majority. Neither was a commitment to working hard seen here as a social disadvantage. There was a sense that although some people might "think it a bit odd" to work hard, everyone had their niche.

There are lots of people in our school who will always get answers right and spend all weekend on their homework. And they're all friends within their group. (Year 9 boy, School C, Theme 4.1a)

Table 5.4 Overview of Key Theme and Sub-theme relationship for Research Question Three, derived from IPA analysis of Study Two interview data

RQ	Key Theme	Constituent Theme	Constituent Themes				Source data
3	Potential Inhibitors	4. Institutional or Cultural Facilitators and Inhibitors	4.1	School culture conducive to high achievement (pupil perspective)	4.1a	Positive/negative experience of in-school culture	Pupil group interviews
					4.1b	Experience or awareness of school cultures elsewhere	
			4.2	Peer culture (pupil perspective)	4.2a	Social acceptability of study or achievement	
					4.2b	Peer-related support /stressor	
			4.3	External factors (family/community)	4.3a	Supports / undermines high achievement	
					4.3b	Family-related cause of stress	
			4.4	School culture (school perspective)	4.4a	Environment conducive to high achievement	Staff 1:1 interviews
					4.4b	Offsetting of social/cultural deficits to aid high achievement	
			4.5	Peer culture (school perspective)	4.5a	Positive climate for learning	
			4.6	External factors	4.6a	Relations with Parents	
					4.6b	Understanding of spectrum of needs	

Often in interviews reflection on the pupils' own school culture led on naturally to discussion of what it must be like elsewhere. Academic expectations were a significant factor here and although they might in one sense have found them burdensome, they implicitly celebrated the fact their current school encouraged them to aim so high.

So it's kind of weird when you talk to people from other schools and they say I have C in my GCSEs when you are told that C is really bad here ... here the expectations are very high.
(Year 9 boy, School C, Theme 4.1b)

In one case it appeared that good marks actually gained one credibility and even admiration: "I think if you do well, people may think badly of you ... In this school, they seem to admire you" (Year 9 boy, School B). The perception of a different culture in other schools, real or imagined, emerged:

Well, I have heard of other schools where people get bullied for being smart. (Year 9 boy, School B, Theme 4.1b)

Even in the culture of the case study schools however, there was the danger, it seemed, of risking and losing social credibility by being seen to do well. The issue of social acceptability was a strong emergent theme. It was important to have a "social life" (Pupil, School C, Theme 4.2a), but it was possible to have this and work hard at the same time. This was aided by the fact that "we all work hard", so the majority of pupils appeared to support this ethos.

One pupil articulated a sense that it was certainly possible to have a positive attitude to learning and have a lot of friends, but that it was equally possible to achieve well and become "kind of personality-less – just going and doing well" (Year 9 boy, School B, Theme 4.2b). One interpretation might be that the issue of study and achievement was irrelevant to one's ability to make friends in this school – it really came down to personality.

Outside of the immediate school environment, attitudes could be a lot less forgiving it seemed, as this extract shows:

Most of my friends hang out with the wrong crowd and most of my friends think it's really stupid to do well and they think ... and they think it's hard to mess around and - I'm not saying names - and they're just sat there like, and I'm like, "I actually have to go home and study." And they're like, "Hello? Mess around!"
(Year 9 girl, School D, Theme 4.2b)

The apparent complexity of the social pressures and the possibility that this in itself was an additional burden at a pressurised time for pupils was further illustrated by contributions from two different pupils at the same school. One had found a social niche committed to pursuing the study of Physics:

People do really want to do better and it's not just parents and teachers, but the students as well. In Physics, everyone has got good grades at the moment and passed the Lads' Physics.

Who are the Lads again?

If you do well you get to become honorary members of that group.

(Year 9 boy, School B, Theme 4.3a)

As with any group membership, there would appear to have been social and personal benefits. Maslow (1954 and Appendix 2) identifies membership of groups as a fundamental need. Francis (2010) and Mac an Ghaill (1994) also provide plentiful evidence of the peer validation afforded by membership of distinctive subcultural group. Another pupil reflected further on the issue of personality: "I don't want to seem like I'm personality-less. I want to have friends, but I don't want to do badly" (Year 9 boy, School B, Theme 4.3a). This echoed the findings of Francis et al. (2010) who surface the dilemma faced by high achieving pupils who want to excel academically, but remain popular with peers at the same time. Pupils appeared quite capable of formulating their own sub-groups within the wider school community to support each other socially and academically. Where this form of self-help was less evident, there could be an emotional response, such as when at exam time in one of the schools "a lot of girls were crying with worry" (Year 9 girl, School D, Theme 4.3a). Other external factors might also include the family. Here, pupils were a little ambivalent because, it seemed, "parents – they can put pressure on. They don't mean to, it's just the way (they) come across about it." (Year 9 girl, School D, Theme 4.3b).

The sense that wider community values could impact on a child's ability to thrive, or not, in a high achieving school was also illustrated by contributions from parents in the Focus Group. In expressing relief that they had got their sons into what they considered to be the 'right school' from primary, this parent recognised the prevailing culture and that this could undermine the prospects for high achievement, as here for example: "He was just different; he didn't ever really fit in to be quite honest. He didn't have a particularly enjoyable primary school experience." (Parent, School C, Theme 4.1b/3a). Where the prevailing culture was high aspiring the emotional response was different:

And suddenly he comes somewhere where he meets people like him.
And it's wonderful! Y'know – that's the message I would like to give

to people: there are other boys like your child out there who maybe don't fit the social norms of those around them and might get teased or bullied because of it, but don't despair because you've got to encourage them for who they are...
(Parent, School C, Theme 4.1b/3a)

5.2.8b) Staff

A theme emerged parallel to the reflections in Key Theme 1 on the strategic measures schools had taken to promote high achievement. Evidence emerged which illustrated their positive cultural influences in their schools and how these had been cultivated. One Deputy Headteacher in School B had observed that "the school is littered places where they can go and work together" (Deputy, School B, Theme, 4.4a). One Headteacher recognised that peer pressure not be seen to excel might be an inhibiting factor in any school, so it was incumbent on the Leadership "to provide opportunities for students to stand out ... in a way in which they feel comfortable ... and empowered, rather than being put on the spot" (Headteacher, School A, Theme 4.4a,). Senior leaders also considered it vital to offset some of the deficits in self-confidence and social skills that might prevent potential high achievers from progressing. One noted that such pupils "sometimes suffer from this fixed thing where they think: 'I'm going to be found out any minute. I'm not really as bright as they think I am.'" (Headteacher, School B, Theme 4.4b). This echoed the work of Matthews and Folsom (2009) and Dweck (2006) who both recognise the fragility of high ability in adolescents if the 'mindset' in question is not bolstered by high levels of self-confidence and the commitment to practise to ensure mastery. Others recognised that SEN provision in the context of gifted pupils was "more about the social element and ... how to conform to social expectations" (Deputy, School B, Theme 4.4b) than issues such as physical disability.

Participants provided evidence of how the school had sought to create a positive climate for learning. The most striking examples came in the form of school-wide programmes such as the Apex programme at School A described above. Where this had impacted on classroom practice the results were said to be extremely helpful for teachers and pupils engaged in advancing high level learning.

... The learning is actually in the domain of the students and I'm just facilitating that. ... If you are in a class where there's a lot of

questioning and open philosophical discussion, then there will be a lot of learning...

(Gifted and Talented Coordinator, School D, Theme 4.5a)

This could be undermined however by strategic changes of direction, forced on the school by policy change, with the result that a key part of the focus on potential for high achievement or the equivalent might be removed:

As such there isn't an integrated programme for Gifted and Talented...My focus now is that we are part of the PicsL group of schools. .. This means looking much more closely at the interventions we are doing in our schools for our D/C students...

(ex-Gifted and Talented Coordinator, School D, Theme 4.4a/5a)

The same participant recognised from the teacher's perspective the dangers of not engaging with some of the peer pressures already noted which might prevent high achievers from fulfilling their potential. She argued that a key inhibitor would be "the sense of being identified in a school that isn't highly academic...could be difficult from the students' perspective" (School D, Theme 4.5a).

Finally, an understanding of the range of SEN emerged as a key contributor to effective support structures at the level of the individual. It was necessary for key staff to be able to identify the inhibiting effects of autism (School D) and perfectionism (School A). It was clear from case study descriptor data that participating schools had made highly effective provision. This might be in the form of a specialist unit (School D) or a student welfare programme with a focus on high achievers (School C).

5.3 Comparative analysis of themed findings from Study Two

The findings from Study Two again showed that the influence of teachers was profound. Activities in class which were challenging intellectually and at the same time fun were highly conducive to learning for high achieving pupils. Lessons incorporating performance, creativity and collaborative work were highly valued. There was a positive emotional effect also, in that pupils reported that laughter was prevalent and that they enjoyed strong relationships with their teachers. A disciplined environment was also valued (Key Theme 1). These findings supported earlier work by Leyden (2010) in particular on the fundamental importance of enjoyment in the classroom and

Winstanley (2010) on the notion of cognitive dissonance as a means of stimulating challenge. Both studies recognise the importance of these qualities in all classroom practice, but are emphatic about their particular relevance to high ability provision.

Although pupils were aware of structured programmes aimed at potential high achievers, they objected to labels (“gifted and talented”) and to being singled out. They preferred lower key approaches which gave them a more ‘natural’ environment within which to excel (Key Theme 2). This was borne out by Freeman’s (2008) argument against withdrawal, separation and acceleration of highly able pupils, unless it involves streaming within a cohort in order to retain the social and emotional benefits of working with age-peers.

All had high academic aspirations – to achieve predominantly A*/A at GCSE, with some expressing preferences even at Year 9 for top universities such as Oxbridge. There was more variation in attitude and awareness here, with some pupils clearly experiencing a greater degree of influence from the family than others. Whilst some felt pressured by challenging target grades, all appreciated that this was necessary part of the journey to excellence (Key Theme 3). The findings supported Stobart (2008) and Dore (1976) on the problem of the importance attached to the grade outweighing the intellectual significance of the subject studied, but suggested that school culture and to a larger extent that of the family played an important role in exacerbating this attitude. The perceived correlation between the GCSE grade and the higher education destination was strong.

Pupils at School A, B and C regarded the level of academic expectation as a defining quality of their school, but took pride in this fact. (“It is a privilege to go to this school.” Year 9 boy, School C, Theme 4.2a) They had had to deal with conflicting peer pressure from within and from outside of the school. Whilst they and their parents agreed that top grades were not demanded explicitly, they sensed the disappointment this might cause their parents if these were not achieved (Key Theme 4). The findings of Francis et al. (2010) on peer attitudes to high achievement, Goodall (2012) on parental engagement and Leyden (2010), Fitton (2020), Stopper (2000), Freeman (2008) and Wallace et al. (2010) on the responsibility of schools and school leadership to nurture positive attitudes to learning and achievement were corroborated.

A better balance was struck in Study Two between evaluation of effective classroom practice and pedagogic interventions on the one hand and SEN provision on the other. Both are relevant to this field, but the failure to include enough classroom practitioners in the Study One interviews risked skewing the findings towards the emotional and behavioural issues at the exclusion of best practice in teaching and learning for high achievement. Where a specialist in ASD/Asperger's was interviewed, it was found that client pupils of the unit in question shared some of the characteristics which had troubled the SENCO in School C. These included delayed development of social skills, low self-esteem and obsessive behaviours which sometimes obstructed the forming of successful relationships with peers. It was notable that the best resourced SEN provision occurred in the non-selective schools in the study, although the complex needs of gifted pupils with SEN were a concern for teachers in all the case study schools, selective and non-selective. This suggested that key related research, such as Montgomery (2010) and Winstanley (2004 and 2010b), was not as yet impacting on practice in schools with the highest levels of need in this area.

Staff also provided a counter-balanced view of the climate for learning, by outlining with vigour, passion and insight the resources which had been put in place to promote high achievement. In two case study schools (A and B) the alignment between management-led strategy and a positive pupil-led peer culture led to a high degree of commitment from the whole school community to high standards (Key Themes 1 and 4). All four schools were aware of the need to provide for some of the social and cultural deficits experienced by potential high achievers. This could come in the form of in-house research and development on emotional and behavioural support for pupils, to whole year-group project work leading to oral presentations on celebrated artists, musician or scientists. This led to a school-wide appreciation of the value of learning and key cultural achievements in history (Key Themes 2 and 3).

5.4 Summary

Many of the findings reviewed in the Study Two analysis can be corroborated by related research. On classroom practice and strategies for promoting challenge for the gifted, Leyden (2010), Wallace (2010), Wallace et al. (2010) and Winstanley (2010a and 2010b) are key reference points. On the potential fragility of some high achievers,

the findings of Freeman (2008), Stopper (2000) and Leyden (2010) are echoed. The impoverishment of the intellectual content of the curriculum through the over-reliance on high-stakes testing argued by Stobart (2008) was also suggested by the measurement of academic ambition in terms of grades and GCSE as academic and professional gateway, especially by parents. The central role of parents noted by Grolnick and Ryan (1989), Mazzoli et al. (2006b) and Goodall (2012) as agents of engagement and aspiration was also evidenced. Lastly, the distractions and risks to the fulfilment of potential presented by the peer group culture mirrored the studies by Francis (2009) and Francis et al. (2010) especially.

What had emerged most distinctively, however, was the following distillation of key findings:

- a) The school culture in evidence at Schools A, B and C was so committed to the concept of high achievement and learning for its own sake, that the prevailing sub-culture mirrored this in one case by celebrating pupils' own intellectual achievements(in this case the "Physics Lads") and in so doing validated their social as well as their academic identity.
- b) Parent anxiety about examination results and the longer term implications of these was more intense than that of the pupils. This was not found to affect wellbeing from the perspective of the pupils (although staff suggested differently), but was found to impact on parents' own peer relations and even happiness.
- c) The distribution of knowledge and resources centred on SEN was uneven, with School D (non-selective) the best resourced. This suggested that giftedness and need were not correlated and that in high ability settings understanding of the interplay between the two was relatively unsophisticated.

Study Two achieved its aim of widening the scope of the investigation into the academic and pastoral needs of potential high achievers. The Study One process had enabled a more focussed series of questions to be asked in Study Two, through reflexive self-evaluation of the preliminary findings. Although this presented some logistical problems, given the limited time and resources available to handle the quantity of transcript data, a wider range of constituent themes emerged from the interpretative analysis of the Study Two interview transcripts. This meant that a more

detailed impression could be gained of the experience of school programmes and underlying cultures where overall achievement was consistently high.

The empirical data provided a basis for comparative analysis of the findings from the review of the key literatures. The following chapter evaluates the meaning and significance of the clusters of findings from the investigation - Teaching and Learning, Pupil Support, Aspiration and Potential Inhibitors. It then proceeds to examine those data which appear consistent with the findings from previous research and those which diverge.

Chapter 6 – Reflection and Discussion

6.1 Introduction

The aim of this study was to explore current approaches to the education of potentially high achievers and to examine the impact of these from the perspective of pupils, staff and parents. The project sought to capture pupils' experience of schooling where there was an expectation of achievement of seven or more A-A* grades at GCSE. It drew on the interview responses of key school staff, including Headteachers, to questions about educational provision for the highly able. Finally, it obtained the views of parents. The evidence was gathered from four case study schools within which a total of 33 pupils, 11 staff and 18 parents were interviewed. The aim of obtaining an authentic impression of participants' experience of high ability education by harnessing the voice of pupils and that of parents was achieved. This approach was influenced by the interpretivist work of Bloom as reported in Howe (1990), Stopper (2000), Pomerantz and Pomerantz (2002) and Grolnick and Ryan (1989).

This research set out to find out from potentially high achieving pupils about their experience teaching notionally tailored to their needs and other forms of support provided by their schools. It did so in order to generate knowledge in an under-researched area for the benefit of school leaders, teachers and parents of such children primarily. It also examined the impact of national policy change on provision for the highly able at school level and the influence of changing conceptualisations of giftedness as a factor in this process. Such changes in the conceptual terrain have been identified by commentators such as Tannenbaum (2000), Campbell (2004), Gagné (2009) and Smithers and Robinson (2012) as causes of inconsistent, if not inadequate, provision for the highly able. This study of concepts has been set against an historical analysis of the key paradigm shifts from Galton (1865) through to Renzulli (1978), Sternberg (1984) and Dweck (2006). (See Tables 2.1 and 2.2.) Results from the fieldwork have also been located within the context of recent policy changes which culminated in the abolition of NAGTY (DCSF 2009) and recent funding cuts (Baker 2010; Smithers and Robinson 2012). The focus of the interview process was provided by the three Research Questions:

1. How can high achieving pupils of secondary age be nurtured so that they fulfil their academic potential?
2. What experiences affect their achievement and wellbeing? How can these be addressed?
3. What do teachers need to know in order to maximize the achievement and wellbeing of highly academic pupils and minimise the impact of negative risk factors?

This chapter addresses those questions by drawing on the key findings from the data analysis set out in Chapter Five. It also appraises the value of a pupil voice approach to research in this area, suggesting strengths, drawbacks and possibilities for further application.

Analysis of the evidence suggests that current provision for potentially high achieving pupils is informed by four clusters of experience, namely: teaching and learning; support for pupils; aspiration and anxiety; and potential inhibitors. The discussion below reports on the subjective experiences of pupils, staff and parents in these areas and assesses the evidence most pertinent to the Research Questions. The chapter concludes by reflecting on the key factors which aid or obstruct the target pupils' enjoyment and achievement at school and the implications of these for teachers and school leaders.

6.2 Evaluation of the sample of schools

It is important to note that of the four participating case study schools, three were selective. (See Appendix 16 for school descriptors.) Whilst this may have impacted upon the generalisability of the findings, it should not be considered to diminish their validity. The majority of children in this country do not attend selective schools, but there are potentially highly able pupils in every school. (There are 166 grammar schools, including two semi-selectives, out of 3127 secondary schools in England, according to DfE -www.gov.uk/government/publications/schools-pupils-and-their-characteristics - in 2010.) Whilst this research has focussed on pupils and their experience, it does not claim in addition to make a value judgement about the

relative effectiveness of different settings. The reason for this is to avoid introducing an ideological strand into the discussion. It is valid, it is contended, to examine pupils' experience regardless of setting and elicit findings which will be beneficial to all practitioners coping with the need to ensure all pupils "make progress relative to their starting point", as directed by OFSTED (2013: 5 and 17) and including "gifted and talented groups" (OFSTED 2010b: 12), without excluding others or impairing the wellbeing of those considered to be in this category. The inclusion of an outlier school in the sample (School D – non-selective) was designed to redress the balance by allowing for the analysis of practice outside of grammar schools and thereby enhance validity. It is accepted however that a broader-based sample would have helped build on the findings from School D which suggested that gifted and talented pupils who find themselves in a small minority of the school population sometimes experience difficulties emanating from negative peer pressure towards high achievement and those who aspire to it (c.f. Francis 2009 and Francis et al. 2010). This finding did not occur in the other schools, but this should not diminish its significance or validity. Whilst it is valid to say that pupils in the schools surveyed appear to be thriving, it is not possible however to generalise further and make this claim for all highly able secondary pupils. This is because the sample is disproportionately weighted towards selective schools. It is recommended that further empirical work is undertaken in this area. This could be quantitative and entail a survey of a much bigger representative sample of schools. Alternatively, the qualitative approach adopted here could be replicated in a wider range of settings.

Key to a defence of the make-up of the sample is the notion that pupils here were invited to voice their experience of the education they received, in particular about the nature of classroom interactions and teacher practice. Other participants were also interviewed for their professional and parental experience of leading, managing and parenting in the interests of highly able children. There was no agenda to determine the type of school they preferred in this context because this would have entailed generalisation beyond what was justified from the nature and size of the sample. The finding that particular methods appear to work better from their perspective is valid for the sample, but it is accepted that this is not generalisable to the

wider population of schools. This research follows Robson (2003: 170-177) in its definitions of “reliability”, “validity” and “generalisability”. Further elaboration of the rationale for the sample make-up is provided on p.69 of the Methodology (in Chapter Three) where reference is made to Gorard and See’s (2011) account of the minimal impact of school type on pupil enjoyment and attitude.

6.3 Evaluation of the pupil voice approach

The tall poppies who participated in this research have revealed candidly what they enjoy in their classrooms and what helps them learn. It is concerning that so much of this pleasurable learning, as they would view it, is at odds with the spirit of wider curriculum reform and the framework of schools’ accountability for results. Pupils interviewed were generally happy and gave little indication of exam-driven stress. It was clear that they knew of, and in one case study had experienced, negative peer pressure towards the idea of succeeding academically. They told of their appreciation of the academic support available in their schools, especially when it is provided by older students. They value the safety net of strong pastoral systems. They are not as concerned about grades as their parents or their teachers would like them to be, but nevertheless are quietly confident that they will do well. That is not to say that exam stress does not exist, it was not especially evident in the pupils interviewed.

Although it is not possible to prove the universal validity of such findings, the vividness of the responses and the insightfulness of the observations suggested there is scope for further investigation. This aspect of the research strategy is further justified by the stimulus it has provided me as Headteacher and other colleagues involved in the research to harness the voice of pupils in raising teacher effectiveness in teaching the highly able.

We can also observe from the pupil-centred approach a clear distinction between the perceptions and preoccupations of the children and the adults involved in the study. Peer relations would appear to be the key concern for pupils. By contrast, parents were preoccupied with grades, entry to Sixth Form and acquiring the necessary qualifications inside and outside the classroom to gain entry to good universities. Meanwhile the staff interviewed who admittedly had challenging pastoral roles in addition to major teaching duties, were preoccupied by the risky behaviours and self-

esteem issues of the less happy, but bright children for whom they cared. This was not evident from the pupil interviews, but accessing pupils with immediate behavioural or emotional problems would have raised considerable ethical issues around safeguarding and consent. The candour of staff involved in describing increasingly creative ways to reintegrate often very bright pupils whose enjoyment and wellbeing at school had been seriously compromised and in accounting for the sort of difficulties they had encountered provided an important counterpoint the voices of the pupils. The expertise and commitment of all the case study schools to provide discreet but effective support especially for pupils on the ASD/Asperger spectrum was notable, and suggested that gifted children also thrived in schools committed to supporting SEN more widely.

For school leaders the challenge was twofold: firstly, there was the impulse to provide stretch and challenge for the most able, but to do so in a way which is not excluding of others. Secondly, there is the challenge of combatting a potentially negative subculture by ensuring that a mainstream school culture which focuses on and celebrates achievement is robust enough to counter negative peer pressure amongst those for whom learning is not cool. These findings are examined in more depth in the sections that follow.

6.4 Summary of the key findings

In analysing the four clusters of experience, certain Constituent Themes emerged. Regarding teaching and learning, it was found that these consisted of pupils' perceptions of:

- a) stimuli towards effective learning in the classroom;
- b) teacher behaviours;
- c) planned activities which promoted positive emotional or cognitive responses.

Staff responses stressed the importance of the school's vision and values in determining curriculum design and specialist provision for highly able pupils. Parents meanwhile focussed on the culture of the school and the degree to which this was orientated towards high achievement, high expectations and positive relations between their children and their teachers. The teaching and learning focus in the interview schedules

was influenced by Montgomery (2009a), Winstanley (2004 and 2010a) and Campbell (2004) and the classroom-focussed approach of NAGTY (Eyre 1997).

In the case of the second cluster - forms of support for the target pupils - constituent themes included pupil experience of: whole school programmes focussed on high achievement; training in self-management techniques; targeted intervention for gifted and talented pupils and involvement in extra-curricular activities. Analysis of staff responses indicated a preoccupation with management structure and variable degrees of engagement with an underlying philosophy about high academic achievement and the nurture of it. Parent perceptions were shaped by experiences in other schools and relative levels of satisfaction with the provision. This strand in the interview process was shaped in origin by Hollingworth's (1942) holistic approach to studies of gifted children and their wellbeing. More recent studies of the critical role of school leaders in creating an environment within which potential high achievers can thrive was also influential, especially Wallace (2004 and 2010), and Fitton (2010).

The third grouping on aspiration and anxiety consisted of pupils' own academic expectations, including university destination and careers, and their experience of family influence or pressures. Equally dominant were the perceptions of staff about the assessment regime within which they were working, the pressures this caused and the critical importance of school culture in ensuring pupils' success in performance terms. Parents revealed high expectations for their children's academic performance and especially their university prospects, but also personal anxieties about the level of their own involvement in their children's education. Findings here were nuanced by the outcomes of publicly funded reports on social mobility and access to the professions (MORI 2008; The Sutton Trust 2008a; McFadden 2010). The anxiety generated by the pressure to achieve highly in examination terms is reported and appears consistent with the findings of Freeman (1990 and 2008), Mazzoli (2006a), Campbell and Muijs et al. (2006), Amrein and Berliner (2003) and Leyden (2010). Pupils interviewed did not display low motivation as a result of exposure to an intensive testing regime, as found by Amrein and Berliner (2003). More distinctive was the finding that this concern is more keenly felt by parents interviewed, who considered grades and even extra-curricular activities as a means to a successful university application. Whilst pupils

themselves did not indicate that such anxiety was causing serious emotional difficulty, staff in one school reported the negative psychological impact, including depression, on other target pupils caused by a nexus of pressures from school, parent and self. This accords with the work findings of Jackson (1998) and Peterson (2006).

Lastly, the cluster related to potential inhibitors of achievement amongst the target pupils included factors such as the peer sub-culture as experienced by the pupils in school or in the wider environment. A distinction was made between the *school culture* as articulated by the Headteacher and staff and the *sub-culture* as experienced by pupils outside the classroom. Staff provided the schools' perspectives on these factors. Evidence from parents in this cluster was thin, but enough was said about their own experience of the culture "at the school gates" to show that they too could sense a peer pressure of their own. The importance of school and peer cultures in shaping outcomes for potential high achievers has been reported on previously by Montgomery (2009b), Campbell (2004) and OFSTED (2009). Their findings were borne out by data from the interviews.

6.3 Experience of Teaching and Learning (first cluster findings)

The target pupils' perceptions of their classroom experience and the relative effectiveness of it in aiding their enjoyment and achievement were considered critical to an understanding of what works best. Pupils themselves gave insights about what was effective and also fun. These were characteristics of memorable lessons which had clearly motivated them to achieve highly. A sense emerged of the academic benefit of the Vygotskian challenge advocated by Winstanley (2004: 82). The findings from the IPA analysis of parent interviews were helpful in pointing up the consistency between their subjective understandings and expectations and the experience and preferences of pupils. They too wanted their children to go to "another level" in their learning and, still more, experience the possibility of failure. Headteachers interviewed helped nuance this finding by endorsing schoolwide programmes, but at the same time stressed the need for sophisticated levels of support in instances where emotional or behavioural traits inhibited performance.

This section examines what can be learnt from the experience and perceptions of all participants about:

- classroom experience;
- the influence of teachers and the impact of resources such as ICT;
- school vision;
- curriculum design;
- the climate for learning.

Table 5.1 and the IPA commentary alongside show how these themes were constituted. The finding that potential high achievers will thrive when intellectually challenged to an appropriate degree is consistent with both Freeman (2008), Winstanley (2004 and 2010) and Montgomery (2009b). It is also suggestive of Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the Zone of Proximal Development as the critical location of effective teaching and learning in all pupils and the critical importance of gauging this accurately – especially in the context of high ability provision. This pre-supposes that teachers are equipped with all the available prior attainment data at the level of individual pupils and understand fully the implications of these.

6.3.1 Classroom experience

The pupil participants expressed strong preferences for classroom activity which was interactive, creative and collaborative. Responses were characterised by an emphasis on memory, with high appreciation expressed for lessons which made a lasting impression and which had clearly helped in the learning process. Activities which proved memorable were diverse and apparently novel. Acting out a pantomime, performing a dark scene from a play, responding to a challenging debating position, for example about the Holocaust, were considered activities highly conducive to both learning and enjoyment. Tactile or creative experiences such as painting, self-guided learning or practical lessons where ownership was handed to the pupils who then led on creating a product like a dance – were highly valued.

The findings from interviews with parents were ambiguous. On the one hand it seemed that the “challenge” and “mental stimulation” which they sought was in preference to the non-academic activities favoured by their children. On the other, they and their children were looking for “stretch” and variety in the classroom in a way often precluded by adherence to an external curriculum goal, like public examinations. Staff reported witnessing extraordinary intellectual feats in the lunchtime breakout area

for pupils with social-interactional issues ('chill zone'). Another noted a lack of sympathy on the part of a parent whose child was unwell. The parent deemed absence from Art or PE acceptable, but insisted on the child's attendance at Biology. A hierarchy of subjects appeared strong in the mind of this parent – one which was at odds with activities considered enjoyable by the pupil participants. This implied that some parents have preconceptions about the validity of certain classroom activities and their relative worth, whilst pupils have equally strong views about what they enjoy and find conducive to learning. These views may not be compatible and may lead to the teacher or school having to mediate. (Boxes 6.1, 7.1 and 8.1 in Appendices 6, 7 and 8 below present selections of source data from the full series of interviews.) This is an area of potential contention noted by Goodall (2012) who draws the distinction between parental engagement with learning in the home, which is considered essential, and learning in the school, which should "arise out of a dialogue with the child" (op. cit.: 12). One might add that dialogue with the school is also vital.

6.3.2 The influence of teachers and the impact of resources

Evidence reported from pupil interviews showed that teachers who injected challenge into their lessons were highly valued. Qualities within the teacher which met with the approval of the target pupils included friendliness, fun and a willingness to challenge conventions in argument or even by their physical stance in the classroom. It was not a problem if a teacher was strict. There appeared to be a healthy tension between the pupils' quest for the "weird", the funny and the memorable and their simultaneous desire for discipline and a "boundary". Regarding resources, it was notable that the opportunity to create a video clip to link with an essay-planning exercise and other activities involving creative use of pre-planned drama props found approval. This pointed towards pressures on teachers to fulfil certain conditions in satisfying the target pupils. They should possess a friendly, funny demeanour, a willingness and confidence in the use of a range of ICT and other resources and sound discipline with imaginative planning. Parents valued highly the strength of the relationship between their children and their teachers and could readily name those teachers they considered to be best at promoting challenge. Lessons incorporating performance, creativity and collaborative work were valued for their apparently

positive emotional impact, with pupils reporting that laughter was prevalent and that relationships with their teachers were strong. (See Boxes 6.1, 7.1, 8.1 in Appendices 16, 17 and 8 for source data.)

6.3.3 *School vision*

This theme was constituted from data largely gathered from staff interviews, in particular Headteachers. Two of the four case study schools had a clear policy and a committed and sympathetic approach to high achievement. They considered this approach best in striking the balance between selection by ability and an inclusive ethical position. By aiming high on behalf of all students, both the gifted and lower-attainers benefitted. All Heads used the term ‘gifted and talented’ indicating that despite increasing professional reservations, the terminology from the NAGTY era exerts considerable residual influence.

6.3.4 *Curriculum design*

The means of embedding the vision in curriculum design varied greatly, with the Apex programme at School A offering the closest approximation to Renzulli’s (1978, 2000 and 2005) seminal Schoolwide Enrichment model. The Headteacher described this as a model for supporting and nurturing high achievement. This ensured that all pupils had an opportunity to experience specialist provision in the form of extended project work, report-writing and a presentation to peers. Pupils mentioned it in interview themselves, although they gave less detail than staff. Another Headteacher (School B) captured the ethos behind the programme in his school by quoting Renzulli and the “rising tides that lifts all ships” (Renzulli 1978). Given the high levels of achievement at both schools and the high levels of engagement with the learning culture as suggested in the pupil interviews, it appeared that a curriculum founded on an aspirational vision were conducive to a fulfilling academic experience.

6.3.5 *The climate for learning*

As to experiences which might affect achievement or wellbeing, the research found that pupils were most likely to refer to peer pressure. The prevailing school attitude towards learning and achievement was a critical determinant of enjoyment of schooling for these highly able pupils. Where it was ‘cool to study’, it seemed

acceptable to identify with a sub-group of peers who were passionate about a dry academic subject. One pupil identified with a group which had become known as the “Physics lads”. It seemed important to identify with one social grouping or another. The alternative was to become “personality-less”, according to another pupil at the same school. Even where the prevailing culture was orientated towards high achievement and a general celebration of learning, it seemed that the pressures exerted by non-academic sub-groups could be powerful. This is consistent with the findings of Montgomery (2009b) and is pursued further below in the analysis of the fourth cluster of findings.

Where pupils found that it was not ‘cool to study’, the pressure to identify with a group which did not rate schoolwork highly was also strong. Pupils at School D spoke of the pressure to conform by orientating themselves away from school values towards a non-academic sub-culture and to “mess around”. It was noteworthy that the pupils in question were earmarked as Gifted and Talented and allocated to a targeted support programme. Although the performance profile of this school was lower than the other three case study schools, it is not contended that high levels of engagement and motivation amongst potential high achievers is connected intrinsically to school type. Rather, it is concluded that more research needs to be done on school culture and its impact on perceptions about high achievement.

Parents recalled feeling a negative social pressure at their child’s primary school – caused, they argued, by the academic success of their child. By contrast, their arrival at a school where it was ‘cool to study’ in the view of their children, had relieved them of this pressure. For the first time they had sensed that their child was ‘normal’ and that there was no stigma attached to being the parent of a successful classroom performer. Parents continued to experience pressures in the secondary school, however, but these were now more focussed on their child’s work habits and the fear that the investment of their own time and emotional energy might be wasted. Less of this pressure in the secondary context seemed peer-driven, perhaps in the absence of the obvious locus for tension provided by primary school gates. The complexity of the parental experience suggested by these findings echoes Grolnick and Ryan (1989), Mazzoli, Campbell et al. (2006b) and Goodall (2012). The key variables which appear

from these studies to impact on this experience are the degree to which the school stimulates and steers parental engagement and the socio-economic context of the parents themselves.

6.3.6 First cluster findings and related literature

The findings about teaching and learning preferences from the perspective of pupils, parents and staff were consistent with the results of other work in the field. Firstly, the notion of challenge in the classroom was desirable to both pupils and their parents. Although articulated in different ways, pupils' description of the novel, the intellectually stretching and the memorable in their accounts of effective learning experiences spoke of a thirst for challenge. Parents interviewed appeared to share this view, but for more utilitarian reasons and with less emphasis on fun. At play here appeared to be the tension between intrinsic and extrinsic factors, potentially producing underachievement, as reported by Montgomery (2009b). The nuancing of these findings through the voices of the key stakeholders provided a rich perspective. The critical importance of schoolwide commitment to high end pedagogy in the interest of all the pupils in the school and especially the gifted is shared by Renzulli (2000), Fitton (2010), Campbell and Eyre et al. (2004), OFSTED (2009), Wallace et al. (2010) and Leyden (2010). The four case study schools appeared to be sympathetic towards the "growth" conception of intelligence advocated by Dweck (2006) and Matthews and Folsom (2009), although this was articulated explicitly by only one participating Headteacher. Such a conceptual position seemed more likely to yield risk-taking and flexible attitudes to identification of the gifted and tailoring of provision.

6.4 Pupil Support (second cluster findings)

Data from the IPA process concerning support for high achieving pupils suggested a correlation between school systems and the other clusters of experience. Where there was a whole school strategy focussed on enriched and challenging teaching and learning experiences for all pupils, there appeared to be a correspondingly higher prevalence of positive experiences in the school. In addition, pupils in these schools – three out of the four case studies – asserted that it was 'cool to study'. This suggests a positive interaction between a high aspiring school culture and

a subculture at ease with the idea of learning and high achievement. In essence, this cluster can be broken down into:

- strategic programmes and local approaches for potential high achievers;
- management structures;
- stakeholder perceptions – especially parents.

Table 5.2 and the ensuing IPA analysis illustrate how these themes were constituted. The discussion below follows the structure of the IPA outcomes, but conflates some of the sub-themes identified to allow for material from the review of the literature to be incorporated.

6.4.1 Strategic programmes and local approaches for potential high achievers

Although pupils were aware of structured programmes aimed at potential high achievers, they objected to labels (“gifted and talented”) and being singled out. From their perspective, the attributes of the school’s approach to supporting them as high achievers which were most helpful included a positive relationship with the teacher enabling constructive dialogue about progress, verbal coaching or detailed written feedback. This bears out the finding of Wallace (2010) that both Assessment for Learning (AfL) and Assessment of Learning (AoL) are key tools in ensuring and achieving challenge, differentiation and personalisation (op. cit. 27-28). All the case study schools practised academic target-setting. The anxiety this generated amongst pupils was offset by an understanding that this was in keeping with the schools’ high expectations and an awareness that appropriate support was in place if needed. (See Table 5.2)

Levels of support ranged from in-class mentoring by other students to ‘breakout’ support for pupils with needs associated with ASD/Asperger’s Syndrome. The strategic focus in one school was aimed at the emotional needs of its pupils, with staff and other resources organised specifically to enable appropriate interventions to occur where a pupil was having emotional or behavioural difficulties or underperforming academically relative to the predicted level of achievement. Other resources deployed included the training of an Emotional Learning Support Assistant (ELSA) and the appointment of a School Counsellor. This approach was based on the assumption that the curriculum itself and the academic expectation implicit within it

generated sufficient challenge for all its pupils including potential high achievers, but that a well-resourced support operation was equally vital.

Only one school had a named programme ('Apex') for its highly able pupils, which was derived from the vision of the Headteacher and leadership. This was inclusive in that all pupils participated, but conducive to high levels of achievement by a few because of the emphasis on a minority gaining recognition from the rest of the school for having performed particularly well on their research project and having presented their work successfully to the rest of the school.

In the one school which practised acceleration of GCSE entry, the pupils on the gifted and talented programme especially objected because of the perceived risk to their overall GCSE performance. Other commentators, such as Winstanley (2004) and Gross (2000) have advocated acceleration (albeit within holistic programmes) as "essential (for its) intellectual and social benefits" (Gross op. cit. 189). The risks alluded to in both cases centre on the emotional and social wellbeing of the pupils concerned, and the extent to which these might outweigh the intellectual advantages. What emerged from the pupils interviewed was the view that the all-important A/A* grade at GCSE was threatened by early entry for the examination. Pupils were equally critical if there was no structure to the programme following the identification stage, confirming the findings of Dore (1976 and 1980), Stobart (2008) and Amrein and Berliner (2003) that high stakes testing "constrains teaching" and "impoverishes learning" (Stobart 2008: 95). They preferred approaches which involved working in groups or with an older mentor. This afforded a comfortable environment within which to excel. Activities outside of the classroom could give rise to name-calling by peers, but where there was a whole school strategic approach, this did not appear to be the case.

All the schools had made a conscious strategic decision to support potential high achievers and allocated resources to this task. The methods adopted were different in each case and the degree of resourcing varied. Risks to the success of such programmes appeared to be the potential for disjuncture between school aspiration and pupil commitment where too little communication had taken place between the two. Secondly, external resourcing was apparently patchy already and declining.

Negotiating the conceptual contradiction between elite aspiration and inclusive provision and effective management of limited resources appeared to be a critical leadership function. Lastly, relations with parents were a key to success, but required skilful communication in explaining the strategic direction and, on occasion, broaching the issue of emotional or mental health support for the child. Where this was seen by the parent as a threat to long-term prospects such as university or career, this could be problematic.

6.4.2 Management structures

Two schools had a Gifted and Talented Co-ordinator within their management structure, with the other schools opting to integrate the role as a responsibility for an existing member of the senior leadership. During the research the Coordinator role was made redundant in one school - to be replaced by a role focussed on ensuring D grade students at least achieved a C grade. This school had achieved marginally above the floor GCSE target of 35% A*-C grades in the previous year and was thus at risk of government-imposed penalties. This had had the effect of diverting resources away from provision for the highly able towards a policy of ensuring that as few as possible pupils achieved below a C grade in any of their subjects. In School D, this had rendered the Coordinator role vulnerable and emphasised the critical importance of leadership in sustaining the commitment to gifted and talented provision, or the equivalent, regardless of the wider funding and political environment.

6.4.3 Stakeholder perceptions

Pupils were positive about the school's attempts to support them, provided that they were not isolated from the peer group in the process. They were sceptical that support was superficial and did not appear to go much beyond identification. Senior leaders recognised this risk and in the best examples had gone to some trouble to ensure the target pupils were not exposed to negative peer pressure, by deliberately placing gifted pupils in "an all-embracing peer environment" (Headteacher, School A). Staff who were not part of the senior leadership were frustrated by parental resistance to emotional support for their children because of the perceived stigma attached to this. One teacher was vocal in her criticism when the commitment of the management to

gifted and talented provision was threatened. Where parents were interviewed, they praised the school for its success in creating a supportive environment where it was acceptable to achieve highly. They were impressed at the speed with which bullying was dealt with and the ability of some teachers to range beyond the National Curriculum. The key areas for improvement were the range and quality of extra-curricular opportunity and the communication by the school of a curriculum map. This they argued would ease their own anxieties about school expectations and also aid them in supporting their child's studies.

6.4.4 Second cluster findings and related literature

Three of the four case study schools had integrated gifted and talented provision into their core curriculum offer. They had achieved this by different means, either by establishing a programme for all pupils which offered scope for excellence and challenge at a very high level for the best performers within the cohort (School A), or by subscribing to the Renzulli (1978 and 2000) "schoolwide" enrichment approach (Schools B and C). These schools pre-empted the integrated approach called for by Smithers and Robinson (2012). The fourth school had opted for the NAGTY model, as outlined by Strand (2006) and Campbell (2004), and latterly criticised by the DCSF (2009). In overview, it can be argued on the basis of the data collected that a whole school strategy is more effective. Such an approach resolves the ethical tension between the inclusive educational philosophy of most Headteachers and school communities and the requirement for differentiated, specialised provision to challenge the potential high achiever and, in a more pronounced way, the extremely able. It is also consistent with Dweck's (2006) argument in favour of an organisational position based on her 'growth' model of intelligence and the recommendations of school-focussed commentators such as Montgomery (2009b), Wallace et al. (2010), Leyden (2010) and Fitton (2010).

Two of the case study schools had sophisticated approaches to identifying and managing special needs in potential high achievers (Schools C and D), including a parallel accommodation and teaching provision at School D. Both schools appeared at ease with the concept of the "masked gifted" (Wallace 2010: 11), but highlighted the lack of research and resources and parental reticence brought on by the fear of a SEN

label as inhibitors of improved practice. Both schools modelled attributes noted by Montgomery (2010) as signifiers of excellent practice in addressing the potential for high or exceptional achievement amongst pupils with dual or multiple exceptionalities (DME). Finally, on acceleration of examination entry, the cautious theoretical support offered by Winstanley (2004) and Gross (2000) was tempered by the finding that pupils themselves were opposed because of the risk to their examination outcomes. The school in question had construed acceleration for challenge instrumentally and simply entered the target pupils early. A more sophisticated approach might have been to teach advanced content early, but delay examination entry to maximise all pupils' chances of achieving a top grade, thus easing pupils' and parents' anxieties.

6.5 Aspiration and Anxiety (third cluster findings)

The aspirations of pupils, staff and parents for excellent outcomes at GCSE produced a dynamic which generated both positive and negative emotional effects. Whilst pupils appeared ambitious yet relaxed about their predicted grades – all uniformly high – their parents frequently displayed anxiety about the results themselves and their responsibilities in achieving the best possible outcomes. School staff appeared pressured, over and above the professional expectation of excellent results, to mediate between pupil and parent so that undue stress was not applied. This complex interaction within the cluster helped provide an understanding of the benefits and risks to pupils of a high-aspiring school and equally ambitious parents. The key sub-themes to emerge from the IPA process included:

- the focus on assessment;
- higher education and careers;
- pupil and parent anxiety.

Table 5.3 above and the subsequent IPA analysis illustrate how these themes were constructed. The following discussion has merged some of these in the interests of economy and to allow for effective cross-referencing to key texts.

6.5.1 The focus on assessment

All pupils were expected by their schools to achieve predominantly A*/A at GCSE. The ambition expressed by the pupils themselves varied, some predicting 5 A*

grades and in one case 10. Broadly their expectation was in line with the school and articulated purely in the form of a desired number of A* or A grades. Grades below this were considered a form of failure. Whilst some felt pressured by challenging target grades, all appreciated that this was a necessary part of the 'journey to excellence'. Pupils were conscious of a high level of expectation on the part of the school, but took pride in this fact. They were equally aware of the disappointment they might cause their parents if this top grades were not achieved. Pressure from a successful older sibling emerged as a source of anxiety in one of the case studies.

Parents expressed anxieties too about how to involve themselves in coaxing their children to higher levels of performance without over-pressurising. The same preoccupation inhibited them also from seeking the necessary help from external agencies when advised by the school. Mazzoli, Campbell et al. (2006b) allude also to the problem of parents reluctant to engage with schools, especially regarding gifted and talented provision in particular socio-economic contexts. In this study, there is more of a sense of stigma arising from the potential risk to the child's longer term prospects where middle class aspiration is extremely high. As noted previously, Grolnick and Ryan (1989) and Goodall (2012) advocate effective engagement with the school and "authoritative parenting" as a means of removing barriers and enhancing achievement. This study, which has found no shortage of strong parenting, concurs with Mazzoli, Campbell et al. (2006b) that this is an under-researched area and that aspiration and socio-economic factors serve to heighten its complexity.

6.5.2 Higher education and careers

Some pupils expressed preferences for top universities. There was more variation in attitude and awareness here, with some pupils clearly experiencing a greater degree of influence from the family context than others. Some were vague or relatively low-aspiring, citing recent television programmes as influences. There may have been underlying socio-economic factors at play here which fall outside the scope the current project, but which would merit more in depth study in future. Parents aspired for more extra-curricular enrichment from the school, on top of what in many cases they themselves were providing. The justification was that UCAS – the university application process – would benefit as a result. No mention was made by parents of

pathways other than higher education. This led to a situation where pupils were either well informed about particular routes to university, or surprisingly ignorant. In one of the schools, a concerted effort was made to supply the necessary social and cultural capital required to give all pupils and especially high achievers the self-confidence to go on to top universities. Extension studies at a local university and theatre visits were cited as ways of achieving this. In this case, it was clear that the Headteacher viewed his school as a driver of social mobility and that it was his school's task to enable all pupils and especially potential high achievers to access higher education.

6.5.3 Pupil and parent anxiety

Parents had high expectations of their children. Their aspirations focussed primarily on grades in examinations, but also on university admissions. They appeared torn between expectations and aspiration on the one hand and anxiety on the other. A sense of angst emanated from an uncertainty about when and how to intervene to support their children's learning. The discussion group at School C revealed a wider concern about the level of enrichment the school could offer on top of mainstream studies. They appeared to view such activities as a means to an end – in this case successful university applications – rather than as an end in themselves.

The pressures experienced by parents were driven by their child's work-rate and in the case study in question this meant too little.

6.5.4 Third cluster findings and related literature

The tension between the inclusive aspirations of Headteachers and the impulse to provide effectively for the highly able was most evident in this cluster of findings. It appeared that the social and cultural terrain had evolved since Campbell's (2004) observations about the negative impact of ideology on "specialist provision (to be) ... commonly constructed as elitist" (op. cit. 2). A complicating factor was the anxiety of pupils about their examination performance (especially at GCSE just two years on from the time of the interviews) and of parents concerning the university prospects of their children. This conception of examination grades as the only meaningful product of a secondary education is predicted by Dore in his *Diploma Disease Revisited* (1980) and appeared compounded by high parental and pupil aspiration and heightened school

accountability for examination performance. Three of the four case study schools had managed to combine a schoolwide approach to gifted provision with a differentiated curriculum offer and sophisticated support systems. The evidence suggested that it was at least possible to reconcile what sometimes appear to be contradictory educational objectives. More recent commentators have argued for a reform of the assessment framework nationally to facilitate challenge through acceleration and differentiation without the burden of terminal examinations for all at age 16 (Smithers and Robinson 2012; Stobart 2008).

6.6 Potential Inhibitors (fourth cluster findings)

The final cluster of findings to have emerged from IPA analysis of the data consisted of potential inhibitors to the fulfilment of academic projections, as perceived by pupils, staff or parents. An interplay between the formal and informal cultures of the schools emerged. This was a key external factor in determining the relative levels of sympathy expressed by pupils for the high expectations placed upon them by the school. Pupils regarded it as “cool to study”, but where they did not they cited the negative attitude of peers as a factor. This bears out the findings of other commentators, especially Leyden (2010) and Montgomery (2009b). Because of the potential ethical difficulty of probing personal issues in a group interview context, internal factors such as self-efficacy and resilience were somewhat under-explored. Enough data emerged in this respect however to suggest that where there was a track record of high achievement in examinations and a positive approach to the nurture of the highly able, schools had invested in thinking skills and metacognitive approaches. School A for example had recently qualified as a ‘Thinking School’ as sponsored by the University of Exeter. Such an approach is endorsed by Montgomery (2009c: 134) who speaks of the benefits of instruction in critical thinking in raising standards for all and especially high achievers. Winstanley (2004) argues for the integration of metacognitive skills and techniques within mainstream curriculum content (op. cit. 120).

Key themes within the cluster emerged as:

- the school culture and its conduciveness to high achievement;
- the peer culture and the degree to which it acted as a stressor or support;
- external factors and the climate for learning.

Table 5.4 above and the subsequent IPA analysis explore the evidence for these themes. Key findings have been distilled into the discussion below with relevant supporting texts cross-referenced.

6.6.1 School culture and high achievement

A distinction emerged from the interviews between the attitudes cultivated by the school and the resources it allocated to promoting high achievement and the peer pressures experienced by the pupils and to a lesser extent their parents. Staff including senior leadership reported a wide range of approaches to supporting the target pupils – from discreet ‘breakout’ facilities at lunchtimes, to flexible availability of suitably trained staff for counselling or a cup of tea, up to and including whole school strategies aimed at raising achievement for all and especially the highly able. It was not possible to gauge which of these approaches was the most effective, but it would be logical to suggest that all would work well in the right context. Leadership appeared critical in not only resourcing the particular strategy favoured by the school, but also in setting the tone for a supportive, personalised and well-informed provision. In the best examples, Heads and Deputies were able to empathise with individual pupils who might fear being “found out” for not being as bright as others assumed, or who, although intelligent, needed guidance on improving their social skills. They also possessed an understanding of the risk factors associated with some highly able pupils, including perfectionism and behavioural traits associated with ASD/Asperger’s Syndrome.

Pupils made frequent reference to what they assumed to be the contrasting culture in other schools known to them through friends or siblings. It was imagined that these were places where one might be bullied for being “smart”, homework was a rarity and teachers might be assaulted. By contrast they felt safe in their own schools and appreciated the schools’ aspiration for them in setting challenging academic targets.

6.6.2 Peer culture

Pupils had experienced negative peer culture, but felt empowered to deal with this in most cases because they could formulate their own sub-groups – sometimes

with a particular academic or creative focus – to counteract its effect. The fear expressed in some cases was of appearing not to have a personality because of a lack of friends. Where the gifted and talented group was a small subset of the cohort as a whole, the experiences were demotivating and vividly recalled. Pupils in the schools where it was agreed it was ‘cool to study’, managed to distance themselves from negative peer influences by attributing it to people known to them at other schools. This was a strong endorsement of the finding of Francis (2009) and Francis et al. (2010) that “working the balance” between social acceptability and academic achievement was a demanding exercise which not all pupils successfully negotiated. This study found however that schools could actively promote a culture which was sufficiently persuasive and effective that it could offset negative attitudes to learning within the subculture.

6.6.3 External factors

In addition to the issue of school and peer cultures and the potential for conflict between the two, it was clear that at least one of the schools was experiencing problems sustaining its commitment to gifted and talented provision because of the withdrawal of external funding and changed political priorities, i.e. floor targets (DfE 2010: para 6.26). This was manifested by the removal of the Gifted and Talented Co-ordinator’s role at that school during the course of the research. The other three schools did not raise external resources as an obstacle to continued provision for the target pupils, although it is important to note that all three had recently converted to Academy status. The consequent improvement in funding streams may have been sufficient to offset the withdrawal of resources previously channelled through the local authority.

Potential inhibitors other than the financial were classed as emotional or needs-related. One school was particularly concerned about Asperger’s-related conditions affecting a small but increasing minority of high achieving pupils, especially in Key Stage 3. Behaviour patterns including aversion to group work, certain sensory stimuli (colours and smells), and even the act of writing could be serious inhibitors of academic progress. This was especially true if the issues were not well understood by teachers. In this instance a drive to raise awareness with staff and even provide appropriate in-house training materials was proving helpful. Networking with schools with specialist

provision for ASD/Asperger's for the whole ability range was also beneficial. An impression emerged of schools striving to adapt limited resources to raise the level of achievement for all, but with widely differing approaches to the highly able. Political imperatives in the other case study school, where overall performance was historically low, were endangering the sustainability of the existing measures in place to nurture the highly able.

6.6.4 Fourth cluster findings and related literature

Pupils appeared more likely to find their school environment conducive to learning where the leadership was clearly focussed on high achievement for all. Such leadership facilitated opportunities to stretch and challenge potential high achievers and remove, or at least minimise, obstacles such as negative peer attitudes or behaviours and poor resources. This finding accords with accounts by Leyden (2010), Fitton (2010) and Wallace et al. (2010) of the critical nature of leadership in ensuring that commitment to high ability provision is sustainable and effective. Staffing of provision with a focus on potential high achievers was managed differently by the case study schools. Two had a designated coordinator on the NAGTY model (Campbell 2004). Two had a senior leader with responsibility, with all the participating Headteachers articulating a coherent vision for the gifted in their schools. Wallace (2010) notes that a hands-on commitment by the leadership is key to symbolising the school's high aspiration for all its pupils, including the highly able. In one school, particular attention was paid to the pastoral needs of the target pupils, echoing the findings of Freeman (2008), Colangelo and Assouline (2000), Peterson (2006), Jackson (1998) and Leyden (2010) in supplementing and enhancing academic challenge with counselling-style support.

There appeared to be a case for further research on the effects of cross-currents of peer pressure within and between schools. Francis (2010), through her observational work on the subjectivities evident in classroom performance by high achieving middle years pupils, illustrates how a 'balance' is struck by such pupils in both succeeding academically and maintaining a popular image with peers. The pupil participants in this project appeared to have adopted similar strategies.

6.7 Summary

In two case study schools the alignment between management-led strategy and a positive pupil-led peer culture led to a high degree of commitment from the whole school community to supporting high achievement. All case study schools were aware of the need to provide for some of the social and cultural deficits experienced by potential high achievers. This could range from in-house research and development on emotional and behavioural support for pupils with Asperger's Syndrome, to whole year-group project work leading to oral presentations on celebrated artists, musician or scientists. This led to a supportive environment in which all pupils including the highly able were at ease, together with a school-wide appreciation of the value of learning and key cultural achievements in history. The key summative findings from analysis of the clusters of experience identified through the IPA process were:

- High achieving pupils thrive on challenge and variety in the classroom and indeed *need* this to enjoy their schooling and perform to their potential.
- Schools which succeed most in providing for their highly able pupils employ a range of approaches consisting of whole school enrichment strategies to individuated interventions to provide support.
- An overarching vision is vital in ensuring consistency and effectiveness of high end provision, but this should be framed within an inclusive philosophy.

6.8 Re-engagement with the Research Questions

This discussion has sought to provide a layer of interpretation to the voices uncovered in the initial phase of the data analysis. It aimed to retain the authenticity of the participants' responses and at the same time to marry this to the key research literature related to high ability schooling. The chapter concludes by re-engaging with the Research Questions and reflecting on what has been learnt.

6.8.1 Findings for Research Question One: How can high achieving pupils of secondary age be nurtured so that they fulfil their academic potential?

The pupils interviewed expressed preferences in pedagogies and school-wide approaches. Whilst it could be argued that these preferences might apply to the majority of pupils in our schools, the focus of this project on the highly able and the striking similarity of responses suggest that an approach based on these preferences

would be beneficial. A key factor in ensuring the fulfilment of the potential of highly pupils is their diet of teaching and learning. Ensuring that this is both academically challenging and enjoyable will enhance both achievement and wellbeing. A balance between a fulfilling experience of the classroom and a safety net provision of pastoral support is vital. This might range from mentoring by senior students in lunchtime academic Focus Groups to external agency support in the form of counselling or even educational psychology.

6.8.2 Findings for Research Question Two: What experiences affect their achievement and wellbeing? How can these be addressed?

The most likely form of inhibitor is negative peer pressure which conspires to make high achievement and a commitment to study ‘uncool’. If this is not countered by a robust school culture which celebrates achievement, minimises bullying and supports pupils lacking in the social skills or experience to find a niche in the school environment, the consequences might be disengagement, disaffection and a negative self-image (c.f. Mazzoli et al. (2006a), Jackson (1998), Peterson (2006) and Leyden (2010)). Parents may occasionally be the source of pressures. At its worst, this might manifest itself as a disregard for the health or wellbeing of a child if there is a risk of what is perceived by the parent to be a vital lesson being missed. On the whole, schools did not have programmes to mediate between parents and pupils in securing and supporting very high level of achievement, but an interesting consequence of the research project itself has been the recognition by the researcher that opportunities to meet with Focus Groups of parents could be beneficial. The anxiety evident in a number of parent responses on their own role in nurturing their child’s gifts and talents might also be allayed in such a forum. There is a case for further research building on these findings and those of Mazzoli (2006b).

6.8.3 Findings for Research Question Three: What do teachers need to know in order to maximize the achievement and wellbeing of highly academic pupils and minimise the impact of negative risk factors?

All teachers need to know and understand the school’s vision for the highly able and its approach to the target pupils. This needs to be reflected in how they teach and based on an understanding that they are the most influential person in ensuring

that any child achieves his/her potential and that this especially applies to the gifted and talented. Such pupils will become bored and disengaged quickly without the stimulus of challenge, humour and physical involvement, as observed by Winstanley (2010a and 2010b), Wallace (2010), Wallace et al. (2010) and Montgomery (2009b and 2009c). Senior leaders in particular need to refine and communicate the vision for the highly able effectively and should command technical knowledge about the academic potential of all pupils, based on an understanding of the available performance and value added data. Even more critically, they need to appreciate the growing issue of the needs of many potential high achievers, some extremely able, who present with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Strong leadership will lead to a supportive, flexible SEN operation which is as conversant with ASD/Asperger's as it is with dyslexia and physical disability. All staff should be alert to the dangers of verbal bullying inside and outside the classroom, especially of the bright pupil with delayed or deficient interpersonal skills, and be prepared to challenge. Pupils are not always able to cope with name-calling on the "nerd"/"geek"/"bodrick" theme and parents are acutely aware of the relative ability of schools to deal with this. They value swift action highly.

6.9 Summary

The research findings have been supported in many ways by the seminal readings reviewed in Chapter Two. Evidence for the virtues of challenging teaching, a supportive environment and well thought-out strategy for enabling high levels of achievement has been found. What makes these issues particularly pressing is the changing educational context currently and the drive towards a core curriculum offer in the form of the English Baccalaureate (DfE 2010) which, on the surface, lacks the creative and engaging opportunities favoured by gifted and talented pupils. There is no reason why provision of the EBacc should preclude challenge, variety and the forms of stimulation noted by the potential high achievers participating in the project, but this will not occur if teachers continue to have insufficient "confidence to work at a *principled level* and avoid narrowing mimicry of the external tests" (Stobart 2008: 111, emphasis added). Alison Wolf's (2011) scepticism about the effectiveness of "government-driven qualification design" in producing curriculum reform should also

be noted. The findings of this report suggest that for potential high achievers, the qualifications themselves are not the problem; it is rather the styles of teaching they encourage which can be. As has been shown, enjoyment through novelty and laughter in the classroom are not incompatible with the acquisition of knowledge and skills pertinent to an examination. Pupils will remember that which is presented to them in a memorable way.

As a concluding concerned comment, it should be noted that the 2010 White Paper, *The Importance of Teaching*, and the new *Teachers' Standards* (DfE 2012c) make scant reference to the needs of the highly able. The Standards require teachers to have “a clear understanding” of their needs (DfE op. cit. 8). The concluding discussion in the next chapter stakes a claim for the timeliness of this project: teachers require more direction on approaches to gifted education if they are to fulfil this standard effectively and if high achievers are not to fall short of their potential. At present there is in our system a paradoxical tension between the learner preferences of gifted pupils and the their parents’ expectations on the one hand, and the impoverished curriculum offer on the other.

Chapter 7 – Conclusions and Recommendations

7.1 Introduction

This research has revealed several areas of educational practice which have an impact on the achievement and wellbeing of potential high achievers. These will be viewed in this chapter from three perspectives corresponding to ‘micro’, ‘meso’ and ‘macro’ levels of analysis, partially based on the model of Bronfenbrenner’s (2005) layered scheme of analysis for complex social phenomena. At the ‘micro’ level it has been found that the classroom is a critical arena for the development and nurture of high levels of achievement and giftedness in middle years pupils. At the ‘meso’ level, the organisation of the school and the cultures associated with it can determine whether high achievement is actively encouraged and supported or whether it is overlooked because of conflicting priorities. Lastly, it is suggested that government policy at the ‘macro’ level and the success or otherwise of national organisations with a vested interest in high ability provision can also determine whether schools are sufficiently resourced and focussed to ensure that the highly able achieve their potential. The caveat here is that, aside from the analysis in the Review of the Literature in Chapter Two, government policy has not been interrogated by the research as such, but merely referenced. The research findings and the methods adopted have been located in a particular policy context at the ‘macro’ level. The focus on pupil performance and wellbeing has been driven by the concern that national policy has impacted on the quality of the experience of the highly able at the ‘micro’ and ‘meso’ level, namely in classrooms and in schools generally. Bronfenbrenner provides a helpful lens for analysis of both the empirical data and themes from the relevant literature. These are not given equal weighting in determining the key recommendations arising from this research, however. The recommendations below are valid only for practitioners, including support staff, and school leaders.

7.2 Classroom practice

Findings for practice in the classroom clustered around teacher behaviours and lesson content. Pupils approved of teachers who were approachable, could “have a laugh” and who managed the boundary well between effective discipline and positive

relations. They were thirsty for memorable experiences. Memory was valued because it offered an assurance to pupils that something had been learnt. Parents spoke of their expectation that teachers would challenge and even transform their children intellectually.

What you are looking for from the teaching is inspirational teachers who provide not just the National Curriculum, but challenge and take the boys to a different place... And I think that you want them to take them beyond their existing thinking.

(Parent Focus Group, School C)

The literature supported this research finding. Winstanley (2010b) argues that high achievers thrive on challenge and find “novelty and passion” a spur to further and deeper engagement with a subject. Montgomery’s (2009b) notion of Vygotskian cognitive challenge as a key aid in generating the fulfilment of high academic potential was borne out by findings from the interviews with pupils especially.

When we set a more open problem to which the learner does not know the answer then the inbuilt propensity to seek closure .. (consonance) drives them to find one. If teachers can harness this natural tendency by appropriate task design then they can motivate pupils very strongly. (Montgomery 2009b: 12)

One pupil commented favourably on a lesson which had required presenting a performance to the rest of the class “from scratch”. Pupils had had to devise their own solution to the problem of putting on such a performance with only minimal support from the teacher.

Three guiding principles emerge from evaluation of the investigation findings and the literature:

- a) teaching styles shaped by the concept of cognitive challenge facilitate high end learning;
- b) pupils can be insecure about their ability to learn because of a preoccupation with their relative ability to remember facts;
- c) Vygotskian theory about effective pedagogy, married to pupil voice feedback about effective classroom technique, provides a vital training asset.

The merit of the first of these principles is proven by the alignment between the research data and the literature. The second is suggested by the frequency of memory-

related vocabulary in pupil responses. This phenomenon may also be symptomatic of the superficial attribution of learning to the regurgitation of facts for assessment purposes noted by Stobart (2008). Regarding teacher training needs however, the theoretical basis of sophisticated, differentiated classroom techniques was not prominent in staff interview responses. The focus here was more upon SEN interventions or school systems and structure, suggesting either that the sample was unrepresentative or that there continues to be a training deficit in this area.

7.2.1 Summary, recommendations and further thoughts

The fulfilment of high academic potential at the classroom level is dependent on a number of important features. Firstly, the quality of teaching is critical and should be shaped by a solid grounding in the relevant psychological and pedagogical theory. There is too little consensus about what works best in the context of the target pupils, as was indicated by the responses of some of the pupils themselves. More of the same is not good enough – “They say you are gifted and talented ... they just say that and leave it.” Year 9 girl, School D. Secondly, the issue of identification of highly able learners continues to be problematic. The residual influence of Galtonian quantitative measures and the association of this approach with social and educational exclusivity have given the process a bad name. Far better to assume high levels of academic potential and implement appropriate diagnostics such as baseline testing and teacher nomination to ensure appropriate focussing of teaching processes and the development of effective interventions for all pupils, including the highly able. Such an approach has a theoretical basis in the literature (Winstanley 2010a and 2010b, Wallace 2010, Wallace et al. 2010 and Montgomery 2009c). Evidence from support staff (Counsellor, Learning Support Assistants, SENCO and Gifted and Talented Coordinator) pointed to the complexities of managing the emotional and behavioural traits of the highly able. Echoing the findings of Francis (2009), Francis et al. (2010), Peterson (2006) and Jackson (1998), this research has found that whilst academic performance can be at/above target level in relation to a high baseline, wellbeing can be at risk - especially through problems with social skills, excess parental pressure, parental discord, negative peer relations, perfectionism, low self-esteem and Asperger-like behavioural tendencies. Such findings suggested that a sophisticated pastoral support system, over and above

tutoring and Year Group/House structures, was vital. This might include, from the example of the case study schools, embedded provision for counselling, a gifted and talented strand within or parallel to the SEN operation, a separately resourced unit for ASD/Asperger's pupils and properly resourced breakout areas for safe, quiet "chill" sessions at lunchtimes especially for the benefit of vulnerable pupils – often synonymous with the highly able.

Lastly, teachers must be prepared and allowed to take risks in their classroom performance. It is notable that of the lessons rated favourably by pupils interviewed, English, Maths and Science were rarely mentioned. As core subjects in the National Curriculum these are more subject to performance analysis, whole school target-setting and (until recently) modular public examinations. It could be argued that these processes conspire against inventive teaching methods.

7.2.1a) Recommendations for practitioners

Responses from the interviews with pupils gave clear indications about the pedagogies which best help them learn and enjoy school. This finding in itself showed the value of teachers listening to pupils. This can help teachers evaluate levels of pupil engagement with their teaching and whether qualities such as pitch, variety and humour are present. Pupils can be involved in the preparation and implementation of new teaching methodologies. Their responses also suggested that while parents might voice concerns about the effectiveness of the teaching and their own ability to support their child's learning, the pupils themselves were comparatively relaxed.

Recommendations for practitioners:

1. Teachers should ensure that the voice of pupils forms a prominent role in re-shaping teaching methods designed to engage and stretch all pupils, especially the highly able.
2. Teachers should seek to engage parents in frequent dialogue about current curriculum content and likely changes, discussing with them how best to support their children's learning at home. Parents' evident anxieties can be alleviated if there are regular opportunities for their questions and concerns to be answered.

3. Teachers should be aware of the complexities and potential vulnerabilities of highly able pupils. Coordination of pastoral and needs-based provision and appropriate classroom approaches, dependent on an effective and frequent flow of information, should be handled by a nominated teacher, SENCO or similar.

7.2.1b) An area for consideration by policymakers

There was a wide variety of practice in the case study schools with programmes for the gifted and talented afforded different levels of priority. It is pleasing to note that in the latest Inspection framework (OFSTED 2013) teachers are encouraged to ensure “pupils make progress relative to their starting points” (op. cit. 17). In practice this means differentiating provision so that all pupils, including the highly able, make demonstrable progress. Teachers’ and school leaders’ professional associations might consider working with the government to produce a series of guidelines for schools which outline the well-documented needs of the highly able and which draw on key research to suggest best practice in stretching and supporting the highly able. Accountability for stretching “gifted and talented groups” (OFSTED 2009) is embedded in the Inspection framework, but the means of fulfilling this objective universally in schools is less so.

7.3 School cultures and attitudes towards high achievement

At the level of school organisation attitudes and efficacy in cultivating high achievement were demonstrated in a number of ways. Firstly, there were the stated aims of the school with regard to academic achievement. Secondly there was the pupils’ experience of the school’s subculture and the attitude to high achievement of the peer group. Lastly, there was the school’s capacity to support pupils outside the classroom, especially the potential high achiever experiencing emotional or mental health issues.

Three schools demonstrated a commitment to the nurture of potential high achievers in their mission statements and mainstream culture.

The mission statement for the school is: support, encourage, achieve.
And that’s the case for all students, whether they’re gifted and
talented or anyone else. .. (Headteacher, School A)

Fitton's (2010) study was referenced in the review of the literature for her research focus on the interconnectedness of leadership and management in promoting and, importantly, nurturing education for the highly able. She captured the essence of a school with an effective approach to building a culture where it was acceptable to excel. In outlining "key factors that develop a school culture for challenge" she argued for:

- A secure general routine and a clear sense of purpose.
- Warm, open and responsive relationships.
- An ethos which builds self-esteem and self-confidence.

(Fitton 2010: 171)

In the majority of schools studied such conditions were evidently in place, especially where students were imagined to have "a personal 'apex' – ... something they are personally best at for themselves" (Headteacher, School A). There was evidence of a sub-culture at play in three of the four schools which challenged the stated mission however.

Although it was considered by the majority of pupils interviewed to be 'cool to study', a tension was described by some of the pupils between conforming or not conforming to the vision of high standards for all. This recalled the findings of Francis (2009) and Francis et al. (2010) who describe the social challenges of pupils in certain settings where participating in such a vision might reduce one to "pariah" status in the eyes of peers more committed to the "intensely hierarchized and jostling social world of the school" (Francis 2009: 658). In only one of the case study schools was it evident that the gravitational pull of the subculture militated strongly against conformity with the ideal of high academic expectation. Here it was not considered cool to study and so, in addition to academic pressures, there was the peer pressure not to conform. The challenge for the pupils appeared to be to attain the optimal position described by one pupil at another case study school:

I think because here we all work hard, we all can get on. Here, working hard can also lead to you being cool I guess. You can work hard and have a social life. (Year 9 pupil, School C)

Francis's (2010) conceptualisation of this dilemma in the adolescent learner's experience as a precarious balance between social acceptability or exclusion was borne

out by the findings. The case study schools however were responsive to this vulnerability and had established a mainstream culture which was sufficiently robust to offset the negative consequence of an anti-academic subculture.

Lastly on the counselling approaches and other pastoral supports identified by Colangelo and Assouline (2000), Freeman (1990 and 2008), Peterson (2006) and Jackson (1998) as a key asset in supporting high achieving pupils, one case study school had instituted similar provision. It did so having made a connection between the ability level and aspirational pressures of its pupils and the need for emotional support. Other schools were more circumspect, but School D had made extensive provision in the form of a dedicated unit for pupils diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome. The high degree of overlap between the issues for pupils in this unit and those encountered at one of the other case study schools suggested that there was further research to be done on implementing specialist SEN provision in highly academic settings - c.f. Neihart (2000) and Montgomery (2010).

7.3.1 Summary, recommendations and further thoughts

The role of school organisation in determining the fulfilment and wellbeing of high achieving pupils cannot be underestimated. This report concurs with commentators such as Fitton (2010), Montgomery (2009a) and Wallace (2010b) who find that strong effective leadership is vital, not only in promoting high achievement, but also in safeguarding potentially vulnerable pupils who happen also be highly able.

Leaders create a safe environment within an ethos and climate of high aspirations, expectations and respect. (Fitton 2010: 165)

Key to leadership in this area is effective management of the area outside the classroom. Tactics employed by the case study schools which are instructive, include: active, public celebration of achievement; timely and effective responses to bullying. In addition, the following areas of outstanding leadership practice were foregrounded by the research findings:

- a) a commitment to sophisticated pastoral and SEN support, including counselling;
- b) an inclusive approach to high ability education predicated on the belief that all pupils are capable of high attainment in at least one area;

- c) high expectations pitched at appropriate levels for all pupils (in line with Winstanley's (2010b) notion of 'equality of challenge').

7.3.1a) Recommendations for school leaders

At the 'meso' level of school leadership, there appear to be two significant roles for senior management in promoting and protecting provision for potential high achievers. Firstly, a proactive approach to shaping the pedagogy experienced by pupils so that it is both engaging and effective is vital. School leaders need to mediate between the external pressure to account for exam performance and inspection outcomes and the sometimes conflicting pressure to address pupils' and parents' demand for innovative and inspiring teaching (Winstanley 2010a and 2010b, Grolnick and Ryan 1989, Goodall 2012). These should not be incompatible objectives, but a high level of commitment is required where the school is at risk of falling short of its performance targets (Stobart 2008). Secondly, school leaders must drive the creation of a culture supportive of high achievement. Leadership in this area must be strong enough to counter the potentially damaging effects of negative attitudes to academic success prevalent in some adolescent cultures (Francis et al. 2010). Parents can also be instrumental in this process by themselves celebrating achievements at home and providing opportunities for extra-curricular enrichment. At the same time they should not exacerbate their own anxieties by considering that they have never done enough or that their children are destined not to succeed. Goodall's (2012) model of "authoritative parenting" offers much encouragement to such parents.

Recommendations for school leaders:

1. Leadership in schools must focus on the development of teaching and learning policies which are not content driven, but focussed rigorously on techniques for assuring engagement and enjoyment in the classroom. Such policies should also alert teachers to the particular needs of the potentially highly able.
2. Headteachers should ensure that existing policies on sanctions and rewards should emphasise opportunities to celebrate achievement in all its forms, inclusively and in a way that negates the adverse effects of some peer attitudes.

3. Within the leadership of schools there should be the capacity to ensure that not only is the OFSTED (2010 and 2013) requirement for the highly able accounted for, but that the challenges of providing for such pupils academically and in terms of care are properly addressed. This may mean appointing someone or adapting an existing role to coordinate, monitor and regularly evaluate the emotional and behavioural support required by some highly able pupils. This will help prevent self-esteem issues and peer group interaction preventing such pupils enjoying school or achieving fulfilling experiences.

7.3.1b) An area for consideration by policymakers and professional networks

Professional associations of school and subject leaders (ASCL, NAHT, GSHA) might want to consider the research and development of training materials to address deficits in leadership and pastoral expertise with a particular focus on potential high achievers. The aim here would be to disseminate more widely the sort of findings about practice captured in this research.

7.4 System-wide policy and practice

Provision for potential high achievers is most problematic at the ‘macro’ level of the educational system as a whole. Findings for classroom practice and school organisation, at least in the case study schools, have shown that there are examples of highly effective practice and management leading to excellent outcomes for pupils and the schools themselves. Several conclusions can be drawn from the interaction between schools and the wider system context observed in the case study analysis and in the review of key literature: national provision is fragmented and dysfunctional; accusations of elitism – a legacy of the separate debate about selective schooling – inhibit the development of coherent programmes; the conflict between paradigms of giftedness is unresolved and equally obstructive; resources are scarce and diminishing whilst levels of accountability for examination performance remain high, resulting in a focus on floor targets at the expense of high end achievement; the pathology of emotional or special educational needs amongst gifted pupils is under-researched in this country and represents a training deficit. The government and educators with

system-wide leverage have the capacity - and indeed an obligation - to address these issues, but continue to fail to do so.

This report concurs with Smithers and Robinson (2012) who have found, as was noted in Chapter 1, that “policy and provision for the highly able in England is in a mess” (op. cit.: i). The latest attempts by the DfE to provide for gifted pupils is half-hearted at best (DfE 2012b). Schools have, in some cases, adopted localised approaches which can be highly effective, but this raises questions about the achievement and wellbeing of highly able pupils in less favoured settings. This is a wider issue for our society given our international standing on child wellbeing through education (UK 17th out of 21 countries on this dimension - UNICEF 2007: 2) and on educational performance (PISA data in Smithers and Robinson 2012). The lack of credible action by the government to fill the void left by the demise of NAGTY and its successor YGT in 2010 is all the more surprising in the context of recent reports which have highlighted the need for improved access to vocational pathways (Wolf 2011) and the professions by “people with talent” (McFadden 2010: 2).

7.4.1 Summary, recommendation and further thoughts

In addition to the economic needs of the country, there is the more significant question of what is best for our able children experiencing life in our schools today. The two issues are closely related in that an unfulfilling educational experience is unlikely to lead to the fulfilment of the potential for high achievement which resides within such children. We continue to define them as “gifted and talented” using quantitative criteria which are nearly 10 years old and now seriously questioned by commentators such as the Sutton Trust (Smithers and Robinson 2012). Until recently, a compulsory data return to the DfE was made by all schools for School Census purposes. Now even that bureaucratic function has gone, with no statutory requirement to make any form of provision for the highly able in any of our schools and no obvious accountability to do so. This study subscribes to the view suggested by Winstanley (2010) that it is time to re-frame the cognitive engagement vital for gifted learners to flourish as a specific need. It further endorses the approach of commentators such as Suissa (2008), alluded to at the end of Chapter Two, who argue that the denial of intellectual challenge to gifted adolescents is tantamount to neglect of the rights of the children concerned.

A key undertaking should be to continue research in this area in response both to the qualitative findings accounted for above and the quantitative investigations of organisations like the Sutton Trust. An objective in doing so would be to review current practice and propose a new, theory-based approach to education of the gifted. As in politics in the 1990s, so in education today – a ‘third way’ which moves the discourse beyond the rhetoric of pro- and anti-selection is called for. A programme which draws upon the best practice in outstanding schools where aspects of the curriculum and associated pastoral systems are specifically orientated towards the highly able would be a first step. An understanding that specialist pastoral support for these pupils is also vital, and increasingly so. This must consist of better training in ASD/ Asperger’s Syndrome issues and related disorders as they affect school age children. It will require system-wide strategy to achieve these ends.

7.4.1a) Recommendations for further research

The pupils interviewed were positive about the learning they received and talked fluently about what they enjoyed. Responses from staff tempered this impression by highlighting the problem of increasingly limited resources and leadership priorities moving away from high ability provision. Staff also reported a small minority of highly able pupils who were struggling to settle socially and access the learning available to the full. In addition then to schoolwide programmes which cultivate high ability pupils’ general levels of engagement and enjoyment, a further research recommendation can be made which builds on the findings of Wallace (2010) Winstanley (2005 and 2010) and Montgomery (2010).

A research recommendation:

Further research should be undertaken to establish the scale of the problem of under-achievement amongst highly able pupils with ASD/ Asperger’s diagnoses. This should lead to the establishment of clear advice and guidance for school leadership on how best to deal with this issue based on the good practiced observed in the case study schools and elsewhere.

7.4.1b) An area for consideration by Headteachers and policy makers

The discussion of the success or otherwise of NAGTY and the Renzulli schoolwide programme in Chapter Two suggests that greater focus on researching and resourcing schools which are successful in high ability provision would be helpful. This would help continued development of their programmes and the sharing of their experiences with partner organisations. Dissemination in this way could be more successful in embedding effective practice than externally imposed 'off-the-shelf' models. Headteachers should scrutinise top-down initiatives carefully and consider developing instead their own vision for supporting and stretching the high able and mobilising resources accordingly. They should always be given the option to adapt government guidelines on gifted and talented provision to suit their own context and resources, whilst retaining accountability through OFSTED.

7.5 Concluding thoughts

My research has found that we are in danger as a society of not providing sufficiently for highly able children. There are complex historical, ideological and economic reasons for this which obscure the fact that the wellbeing and achievement of highly able pupils is at risk. This risk would be lessened if the voice of the children themselves was heard more often. At a time when a potentially constricting and assessment-focussed curriculum model is to be introduced in the form of the English Baccalaureate we need to be sure this offer provides suitable opportunities for pupils to take risks, be creative, laugh, lead and remember. Teachers need to be equipped with the necessary technical skills to focus provision precisely so that the able underachiever and the extremely able are properly fulfilled in the same curriculum context. They must also be properly trained in the emotional and behavioural traits of the highly able adolescent trying to establish his/her identity within an often anti-academic peer-group. Such traits can be exacerbated by the twin stresses emanating from home and school to achieve top examination grades. Such training should extend to Vygotskian theory as an underpinning to improved, properly differentiated classroom practice and encompass awareness of the challenging pastoral issues associated with the extreme low self-esteem and negative self-image of some gifted teenagers. This task demands skilled and visionary leadership, as has been displayed in some of the interviews in the

field. The government should exploit this expertise and invest credibly with the support of the numerous experts in the field and influential professional bodies in producing a new set of standards to govern high ability education.

I conclude that as a society we cannot afford *not* to listen to our able youth. They are resilient, insightful and highly capable, but are we reaching all of them? One poppy untended is one poppy too many.

Chapter 8 - Bibliography and References

Allen, V. (2010). "Fourth Cambridge student found dead in one term after 'suicide jump' at Beachy Head." Retrieved 12/6/12, 2012, from <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1330519/Cambridge-student-Tess-maddock-dead-suicide-jump-Beachy-Head.html>.

Amrein, A., Berliner, D.C. (2003). "The effects of high-stakes testing on student motivation and learning (A research report)." Educational Leadership: 32-38.

B.B.C. News, (2011). "Divided opinion: English Baccalaureate " Retrieved 17/11/12, 2012, from www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-12160738.

Bailey, R., Pearce, G., Winstanley, C., Sutherland, M., Smith, C., Stack, N., Dickenson, M. (2008). A systematic review of interventions aimed at improving the educational achievement of pupils identified as gifted and talented. London, EPPI-Centre, Social Science Research Unit, Institute of Education

Baker, M. (2010). "The scandalous neglect of Gifted and Talented pupils " Retrieved 13/6/12, 2012, from <http://www.mikebakereducation.co.uk/articles/67/the-scandalous-neglect-of-gifted-and-talented-pupils/>.

Balchin, T., Hymer, B., Matthews, D.J. (2009). The Routledge International Companion to Gifted Education. Abingdon, Oxon., Routledge.

Ball, S. J. (1981). Beachside Comprehensive. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press

Ball, S. J. (2003). Class Strategies and the Education Market: the Middle Classes and Social Advantage. London, Routledge Falmer.

Bassett, D., Lyon, G., Tanner, W., Watkin, B. (2012). Plan A+: Unleashing the potential of academies London The Schools Network/Reform

BERA (2004). "Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research." Nottingham: British Educational Research Association.

Binet, A. (1899). The Psychology of Reasoning. Chicago, Open Court Publishing Co.

Binet, A., Simon, T. (1905). "Methodes nouvelles pour le diagnostic du niveau intellectuel des anormaux." L'Annee Psychologique **11**: 191-244.

- Bloom, B. S., Furst, E.J., Hill, W.H., Krathwohl, D.R. (1956). Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: the classification of educational goals. New York, Longmans.
- Bourdieu, P. (1998). The State Nobility: Elite Schools in the Field of Power Cambridge, Polity Press
- Brody, N. (2000). History of Theories and Measurement of Intelligence. A Handbook of Intelligence R. J. Sternberg. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 16-33.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (2005). Interacting Systems in Human Development. Making Human Beings Human: Bioecological Perspectives on Human Development London, Sage Publications Ltd. 67-93.
- Buntic, C. (2009). A short digest of selected research on understanding, nurturing and developing exceptional ability, National Association for Able Children in Education (NACE)
- Burgess, H., Sieminski, S. and Lore, A. (2006). Achieving your Doctorate in Education London, Sage.
- Burt, C. (1909-10). "Experimental tests of general intelligence " British Journal of Psychology 3: 94-177.
- Campbell, R. J., Eyre, D., Muijs, R.D., Neelands, J.G.A., Robinson, W. (2004). The English Model of Gifted and Talented Education: policy, context and challenges National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth (NAGTY) Occasional Papers No. 1. Coventry University of Warwick **No. 1**.
- Campbell, R. J., R. D. Muijs, et al. (2006). Engagement with school, identity and self-esteem: some characteristics of Gifted and Talented students in England National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth (NAGTY) Occasional Papers No. 11. Coventry, University of Warwick **No. 11**.
- Clandinin, D. J., Connelly, F. M. (2000). Narrative Inquiry: experience and story in qualitative research. San Francisco, Jossey-Bass.
- Claxton, G. (2008). What's the Point of School? Rediscovering the Heart of Education. Oxford, Oneworld Publications
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., Morrison, K. (2007). Research Methods in Education, 6th Ed. Abingdon, Routledge.
-

Colangelo, N., Assouline, S.G. (2000). Counseling Gifted Students International Handbook of Giftedness and Talent K. Heller, Monks, F., Sternberg, R., Subotnik, R. Oxford Elsevier 595-607.

Crook, D., Power, S., Whitty, G. (1999). The Grammar School Question: A review of research on comprehensive and selective education Pursuing Excellence in Education London, Institute of Education, University of London.

Danby, S., Farrell, A. (2005). Opening the Research Conversation Ethical research with Children A. Farrell. Maidenhead, Berkshire, UK, Open University Press 49-67.

Davies, P., Telhaj, S., Hutton, D., Adnett, N., Coe, R. (2009). "Competition, cream-skimming and department performance within secondary schools." British Educational Research Journal 35 (1): 65-81.

DCSF (2007). Effective Provision for Gifted and Talented Students in Secondary Education, Department for Children, Schools and Families, Nottingham DCSF Publications

DCSF (2008). Gifted and Talented Education: Guidance on Preventing Underachievement - a focus on exceptionally able pupils. National Strategies. Nottingham, DCSF Publications.

DCSF (2008). Vision and Values of Young, Gifted and Talented, Department for Children, Schools and Families, CfBT, Reading, Berkshire

DCSF (2009). National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth Evaluation DCSF. London, ACL Consulting / Department for Children, Schools and Families.

Denzin, N. K., Lincoln, Y.S. (1998). Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry London, Sage

DfE (2010). The Importance of Teaching - The Schools White Paper 2010. Department for Education. Norwich, DfE/The Stationery Office (TSO).

DfE (2010). "Schools, Pupils and their Characteristics." Retrieved 20/2/2012, from <http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000925/index.shtml>.

DfE (2012a). "School and Local Statistics." Retrieved 20/2/2012, from <http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/performance-tables-2011>.

DfE (2012b). "Academically more able pupils " Retrieved 9/11/12, 2012, from www.education.gov.uk/schools/pupilsupport/inclusionandlearnersupport/a00205083/academically-more-able-pupils.

DfE (2012c). Teachers' Standards, Department for Education. London

- DfE (2012d). 16-19 Funding formula review DfE/EFA. London, Department for Education/Education Funding Agency
- DfEE (1997). Excellence in Schools Department for Education and Employment. London, HMSO.
- DfES (2001). Schools Achieving Success Department for Education and Skills. Annesley, Nottinghamshire, DfES/HMSO
- DfES (2006). Identifying Gifted and Talented Pupils - getting started, Nottingham DfES.
- Dore, R. (1976). The Diploma Disease: Education, Qualification and Development London, Allen and Unwin.
- Dore, R. (1980). "The Diploma Disease Revisited " Institute of Development Studies Bulletin **11 (2)**.
- Dweck, C. S. (2006). Mindset. New York, Ballantine Books (Random House).
- ERIC (1990) Giftedness and the Gifted: what's it all about? What does giftedness mean? . ERIC Digest (Vol. E476) **Volume**, DOI:
- Eyre, D. (1997). Able Children in Ordinary Schools London, David Fulton
- Feldhusen, J. F. (2005). Giftedness, Talent, Expertise and Creative Achievement Conceptions of Giftedness. R. J. Sternberg. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press
- Fitton, S. (2010). Leadership and curriculum provision Raising the Achievement of All Pupils within an Inclusive Setting. B. Wallace, Leyden, S., Montgomery, D., Winstanley, C., Pomerantz, M. and Fitton, S. Abingdon, Oxfordshire, Routledge.
- Francis, B. (2009). "The role of the Boffin as abject Other in gendered performances of school achievement." The Sociological Review **57 (4)**(4): 645-669.
- Francis, B., Skelton, C., Read, B. (2010). "The simultaneous production of educational achievement and popularity: how do some pupils accomplish it? ." British Educational Research Journal **36 (2)**(2): 317-40.
- Freeman, J. (1990). Gifted Children Growing Up London Cassell.
- Freeman, J. (2008). The Emotional Development of the Gifted and Talented Gifted and Talented Provision London.
- Freire, P. (1996). Pedagogy of the Oppressed. London, Penguin Books.

- Gagné, F. (1999). "My convictions about the nature of abilities, gifts and talents " Journal for the Education of the Gifted **22 (2)**.
- Gagné, F. (2009). Talent development as seen through the Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent The Routledge International Companion to Gifted Education T. Balchin, Hymer, B., Matthews, D.J. Abingdon, Oxon., Routledge
- Galton, F. (1865). "Hereditary Intelligence: An inquiry into its laws and consequences." MacMillan's Magazine **2**: 157-66.
- Gardner, H. (1983). Frames of Mind. New York, Basic
- Gardner, H. (1993). Multiple Intelligences: New Horizons New York, Basic Books, Perseus Books Group.
- Goodall, J. (2012) Parental engagement to support children's learning: a six point model. School Leadership and Management: Formerly School Organisation **Volume**, 1-18 DOI: 10.1080/13632434.2012.724668
- Goodley, D. (1998). 'Stories about writing stories': reappraising the notion of the 'special' informant with learning difficulties in life story research Articulating with Difficulty: Research Voices in Inclusive Education. P. Clough and L. Barton. London, BERA/Paul Chapman
- Gorard, S. (2004). Combining Methods in Educational and Social Research Maidenhead Open University Press (McGraw-Hill Education).
- Gorard, S., See, B.H. (2011). "How can we enhance enjoyment of secondary school? The student view " British Educational Research Journal **37 (4)**: 671-690.
- Greig, A., Taylor, J. and MacKay, T. (2007). Doing Research with Children. London, Sage.
- Grolnick, W. S., Ryan, R.M. (1989). "Parent Styles Associated with Children's Self-Regulation and Competence." Journal of Educational Psychology **81 (2)**: 143-54.
- Gross, M. U. M. (2006). "Exceptionally Gifted Children: long term outcomes of academic acceleration and nonacceleration " Journal for the Education of the Gifted (Prufrock Press/Davidson Institute for Talent Development) **29**: 404-429.
- Gross, M. U. M. (2000). Issues in the Cognitive Development of Exceptionally and Profoundly Gifted Individuals International Handbook of Giftedness and Talent K. Heller, Monks, F., Sternberg, R., Subotnik, R. Oxford, Elsevier.
- Guilford, J. P. (1967). The Nature of Human Intelligence New York, McGraw-Hill.

Heller, K., Monks, F., Sternberg, R., Subotnik, R. (2000). International Handbook of Giftedness and Talent. Oxford, Elsevier

Herrnstein, R. J., Murray, C. (1994). The Bell Curve: intelligence and class structure in American life New York, Free Press

Hewston, R., Campbell, R.J., Eyre, D., Muijs, R.D., Neelands, J.G.A. and Robinson, W. (2005). A baseline review of the literature on effective pedagogies for Gifted and Talented students National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth (NAGTY) Occasional Papers No. 5. Coventry, University of Warwick. **No. 5**.

Hollingworth, L. S. (1926). Gifted Children: Their nature and nurture New York, Macmillan.

Hollingworth, L. S. (1942). Children above IQ 180: Their origin and development New York, World Books

Howe, M. J. A. (1990). The Origins of Exceptional Abilities. Oxford, Blackwell.

Hycner, R. H. (1985). "Some Guidelines for the Phenomenological Analysis of Interview Data " Human Studies 8: 279-303.

Jackson, L. (2002). Freaks, geeks and Asperger Syndrome: a user guide to adolescence. London and Philadelphia, Jessica Kingsley.

Jackson, P. S. (1998). "Bright star - black sky: a phenomenological study of depression as a window into the psyche of the gifted adolescent." Roeper Review 20 (3): 215-221.

Janesick, V. J. (1998). The Dance of Qualitative Research Design: metaphor, methodolatry and meaning Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry. N. K. Denzin, Lincoln, Y.S. London SAGE Publications

Jesson, D. (2008). "Grammar schools in the 21st century and "social mobility"." Research Intelligence, 105, pp. 24-25(105).

Kingston, E. (2009). Self-Theories of Emotional Intelligence in Higher Education: Assessment Feedback and Non-Continuation School of Education University of Roehampton, London, PhD thesis submitted to the University.

Kuhn, T. (1996). The Structure of Scientific Revolutions. Chicago, Chicago University Press.

Lacey, C. (1970). Hightown Grammar: the school as a social system. Manchester, Manchester University Press.

- Leyden, S. (2010). Social and emotional needs of gifted and talented underachievers Raising the Achievement of all Pupils within an Inclusive Setting. B. Wallace, Leyden, S., Montgomery, D., Winstanley, C., Pomerantz, M. and Fitton, S. Abingdon, Oxon., Routledge: 33-67.
- Mac an Ghaill, M. (1994). The Making of Men: Masculinities, Sexualities and Schooling. Buckingham, Open University Press
- Machin, S., McNally, S., Meghir, C. (2007). Resources and Standards in Urban Schools London, Centre for the Economics of Education, London School of Economics
- Marland, S. P. (1972). Education of the gifted and talented: Report to Congress by the US Commissioner of Education. Washington D.C., US Government Printing Office
- Maslow, A. (1954). Motivation and Personality. New York, Harper and Row.
- Matthews, D. J., Folsom, C. (2009). Making connections: cognition, emotion and a shifting paradigm. The Routledge International Companion to Gifted Education T. Balchin, Hymer, B., Matthews, D.J. Abingdon, Oxon., Routledge: 18-25.
- Mazzoli, L., Campbell R.J., et al. (2006b). The National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth: pilot survey of members' parents. National Association for Gifted and Talented Youth (NAGTY) Occasional Papers, No. 9 Coventry, University of Warwick **No. 9**.
- Mazzoli, L., Campbell, R.J. and Muijs, R.D. (2006a). What's so different about Gifted and Talented students? Gifted and Talented students and psychosocial adjustment National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth (NAGTY) Occasional Papers, No. 14 Coventry, University of Warwick **No. 14**
- Mazzoli, L., Campbell, R.J., Eyre, D., Muijs, R.D., Neelands, J.G.A. and Robinson, W. (2005). The first annual post-18 survey of NAGTY students National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth (NAGTY) Occasional Papers, No. 7. Coventry, University of Warwick **No. 7**.
- McFadden, P. (2010). Unleashing Aspiration: The Government Response to the Final Report of the Panel on Fair Access to the Professions. Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, Norwich, The Stationery Office (TSO).
- McWilliam, E., Haukka, S. (2008). "Educating the creative workforce: new directions for twenty-first century schooling." British Educational Research Journal **34 (5)**: 651-666.
-

Montgomery, D., Ed. (2009a). Able, Gifted and Talented Underachievers. Chichester, W. Sussex, Wiley-Blackwell.

Montgomery, D. (2009b). Why do the gifted and talented underachieve? . Able, Gifted and Talented Underachievers. D. Montgomery. Chichester, West Sussex, John Wiley and Sons, Ltd.

Montgomery, D. (2009c). Effective Teaching and Learning to Combat Underachievement. Able, Gifted and Talented Underachievers D. Montgomery. Chichester, West Sussex, John Wiley and Sons, Ltd.: 111-154.

Montgomery, D. (2010). Gifted and Talented Children with Special Educational Needs: lifting underachievement in dual and multiple exceptionalities Raising the Achievement of All Pupils within an Inclusive Setting B. Wallace, Leyden, S., Montgomery, D., Winstanley, C., Pomerantz, M., Fitton, S. Abingdon, Oxfordshire, Routledge 68-100.

MORI, I. (2008). Social Mobility London Ipsos MORI.

Morrow, V. (2005). Ethical Issues in Collaborative Research with Children. Ethical Research with Children. A. Farrell. Maidenhead Open University Press

NAGTY (2006). Eligibility Criteria Warwick NAGTY National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth

Neihart, M. (1999). "The impact of giftedness on psychological wellbeing: what does the empirical literature say?" Roeper Review **22 (1)**(1): 10-17.

Neihart, M. (2000). "Gifted children with Asperger's syndrome." Gifted Child Quarterly **44 (4)**(4): 222-230.

Noden, P., Rutt, S., Schagen, S., West, A. (2007). Evaluation of the Two Year Key Stage 3 Project Nottingham Centre for Educational Research, Department of Social Policy, London School of Economics and Political Science/National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER).

Nussbaum, M. (2011). The Central Capabilities Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach. London, The Belknap Press of the Harvard University Press.

OECD (2010). PISA 2009 Results: Executive Summary Paris CEDEX 16, OECD Publishing.

OFSTED (2009). Gifted and Talented Pupils in Schools. OFSTED. Manchester, OFSTED Publications

OFSTED (2010a). Developing leadership: National Support Schools (Executive Summary) London, OFSTED Publications

OFSTED (2010b). The evaluation schedule for schools. OFSTED. Manchester, OFSTED Publications

OFSTED (2013). The framework for school inspection. OFSTED. No. 120100 at <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/framework-for-school-inspection>

Peterson, J. S. (2006). "Addressing counseling (*sic*) needs of gifted students " Professional School Counseling **10 (1)**: 43-51.

Pomerantz, M., Pomerantz, K. (2002). Listening to Able Underachievers. London, David Fulton.

Power, S., Whitty, G., Edwards, T., Wigfall, V. (2003). Education and the Middle Class. Buckingham, Open University Press

Pring, R. (2004). Philosophy of Education Research. London and New York, Continuum.

Reis, S. M., McCoach, D.B. (2013). "Underachievement in Gifted and Talented Students with Special Needs " Retrieved 9/2/13, from <http://www.gifted.uconn.edu/general/faculty/reis/GiftedUnderachievers.html>.

Renzulli, J. S. (1978). "What makes giftedness? Re-examining a definition " The Phi Delta Kappan **60 (3)** 180-4, 261.

Renzulli, J. S. (2005). The Three-Ring Conception of Giftedness: a developmental model for promoting creative productivity Conceptions of Giftedness. R. J. Sternberg. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press

Renzulli, J. S., Reis, S.M. (2000). The Schoolwide Enrichment Model International Handbook of Giftedness and Talent K. Heller, Monks, F., Sternberg, R., Subotnik, R. Oxford Elsevier 367-382.

Renzulli, J. S., Reis, Sally M. (1998). "The Schoolwide Enrichment Model - Executive Summary " Neag Centre for Gifted Education and Talent Development

Richardson, M. (2008). Testing Citizens: Models of Assessment for Citizenship Education School of Education Roehampton University. **PhD**.

Robson, C. (2003). Real World Research: A Resource for Social Scientists and Practitioner-Researchers. Oxford, Blackwell.

Saito, M. (2003). "Amartya Sen's Capability Approach to Education: A Critical Exploration " Journal of Philosophy of Education **37 (1)**: 17-33.

Seldon, A. (2010). *An End to Factory Schools: an education manifesto 2010-2020*. Surrey, UK, Centre for Policy Studies.

Silverman, D. (2006). Interpreting Qualitative Data. London, SAGE Publications.

Smith, J. A. (2008). "Reflecting on the development of interpretative phenomenological analysis and its contribution to qualitative research in psychology " Qualitative Research in Psychology **1 (1)**: 39-54.

Smith, J. A., Osborn, M. (2003). *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis Qualitative Psychology: A Practical Guide to Research Methods* J. A. Smith. London, SAGE Publications

Smithers, A., Robinson, P. (2012). *Educating the Highly Able*, Buckingham Centre for Education and Employment Research, University of Buckingham (for The Sutton Trust).

Spearman, C. (1904). "'General Intelligence" objectively determined and measured " American Journal of Psychology **15**: 201-93.

Stake, R. E. (1998). Case Studies. Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry. N. K. Denzin, Lincoln, Y.S. Thousand Oaks, California Sage Publications.

Sternberg, R. J. (1984). "Toward a triarchic theory of human intelligence " Behavioral and Brain Sciences **7**: 269-87.

Sternberg, R. J., Davidson, J.E. (2005). Conceptions of Giftedness. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press

Stobart, G. (2008). Testing Times: the uses and abuses of assessment. Abingdon, Oxon., Routledge.

Stopper, M. J. (2000). Meeting the Social and Emotional Needs of Gifted and Talented Children. London, NACE/David Fulton.

Strand, S. (2006). Identifying gifted students: an evaluation of the NAGTY procedure. National Association for Gifted and Talented Youth (NAGTY) Occasional Papers, No. 10 Coventry, University of Warwick **No. 10**.

Suissa, J. (2008). "Lessons from a New Science? On Teaching Happiness in Schools" Journal of Philosophy of Education **42 (3-4)**: 575-590.

Sutton Trust, The (2008). *Social selectivity of state schools and the impact of grammars*.

Tannenbaum, A. J. (2000). A History of Giftedness in School and Society International Handbook of Giftedness K. Heller, Monks, F., Sternberg, R., Subotnik, R. Oxford, Elsevier

Terman, L. M. (1916). The Measurement of Intelligence Boston, Houghton Mifflin.
Terman, L. M. (1926). Genetic Studies of Genius Vol. 1 - Mental and physical traits of a thousand gifted children Stanford, CA., USA, Stanford University Press

Thurstone, C. L. (1936). "A new concept of intelligence and a new method of measuring primary abilities." Educational Record **17 (Suppl. 10)**: 124-38.

Tinson, J. (2009). Conducting Research with Children and Adolescents: Design, Methods and Empirical Cases. Oxford, Goodfellow.

UNICEF (2007). Child Poverty in Perspective: An overview of child well-being in rich countries. Innocenti Report Card Florence UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre. 7.

University of Roehampton (2010). Ethics Board of Roehampton University Ethical Guidelines (May 2010). University of Roehampton.

Van Manen, M. (1990). Investigating Experience as We Live It. Researching Lived Experience. Ontario, State University of New York/University of Western Ontario.

Van Tassel-Baska, J. (2005). Domain-Specific Giftedness: Applications in school and life Conceptions of Giftedness R. J. Sternberg. Cambridge Cambridge University Press 358-376.

Vaughan, R., Lee, J. (2010). "Sixth form funding slashed by £120m." TES Newspaper, 26th November. Retrieved 13/6/12, 2012, from <http://www.tes.co.uk/article.aspx?storycode=6064206>.

Vygotsky, L. (1978). Mind in Society. Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press

Wallace, B. (2004). Thinking Skills and Problem-Solving: an inclusive approach London, David Fulton Publications

Wallace, B. (2010). Tackling Underachievement Raising the Achievement of All Pupils within an Inclusive Setting B. Wallace, Leyden, S., Montgomery, D., Winstanley, C., Pomerantz, M. and Fitton, S. Abingdon, Oxfordshire, Routledge 3-32.

Wallace, B., Adams, H.B. (1993). Thinking Actively in a Social Context: TASC. Oxford, AB Academic Publishers.

Wallace, B., Leyden, S., Montgomery, D., Winstanley, C., Pomerantz, M. and Fitton, S. (2010). Raising the Achievement of All Pupils within an Inclusive Setting: practical strategies for developing best practice Abingdon, Oxfordshire, Routledge.

Warnock, M. (2005). "Special Educational Needs: a new look " Impact - a series of policy discussions on behalf of the Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain 11.

Warwick, I. (2009). Improving the quality of identification, provision and support for Gifted and Talented learners from under-represented communities through partnership working Able, Gifted and Talented Under-Achievers D. Montgomery. Chichester Wiley-Blackwell: 219-63.

Watt, N. (2012). "GCSE Exams to be replaced by EBacc." Retrieved 17/11/12, 2012, from www.guardian.co.uk/education/2012/sep/17/gcse-exams-replaced-ebacc-michael-gove.

White, J. P. (2006). An Unexplained Theory of Intelligence. Intelligence, Destiny and Education: The ideological roots of intelligence testing. London, Routledge.

Willig, C. (2001). Interpretative Phenomenology. Introducing Qualitative Research in Psychology. Buckingham, Open University Press

Winstanley, C. (2004). Too Clever by Half: a fair deal for gifted children. Stoke-on-Trent, Trentham.

Winstanley, C. (2005). Investigating the notion of children with multiple exceptionalities National Association for Gifted and Talented Youth (NAGTY) Occasional Papers, No.6 Coventry, University of Warwick **No. 6**.

Winstanley, C. (2010a). Providing challenging opportunities in the classroom Raising the Achievement of All Pupils Within an Inclusive Setting B. Wallace, Leyden, S., Montgomery, D., Winstanley, C., Pomerantz, M. and Fitton, S. Abingdon, Oxfordshire, Routledge 101-130.

Winstanley, C. (2010b). The Ingredients of Challenge. Stoke-on-Trent, Staffs., Tretham Books Ltd.

Wolf, A. (2011). Review of Vocational Education - The Wolf Report London, Department for Education

Wringe, C.(2011). "Teacher Education: Techne or Phronesis" Seminar Paper, Philosophy of Education Society Great Britain (PESGB), Department of Education, University of Oxford, 1/11/11

Yair, G. (2009). "Cinderellas and ugly ducklings: positive turning points in students' educational careers - exploratory evidence and a future agenda." British Educational Research Journal **35 (3)**: 351-370.

Yin, R. K. (2009). Case Study Research: Design and Methods. Thousand Oaks, California, Sage.

Ziegler, A. and T. Raul (2000). "Myth and Reality: a review of empirical studies on giftedness." High Ability Studies **11 (2)**: 113-136.

Appendix 7: Sample Consent Form - Staff

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Title of Research Project:

Nurturing high achievement – what are the needs of gifted and talented secondary age boys?

Brief Description of Research Project:

Investigator Contact Details:

Name: John Weeds
University address: Roehampton University, Roehampton Lane, London SW15 5P

Consent Statement:

I agree to take part in this research, and am aware that I am free to withdraw at any point. I understand that the information I provide will be treated in confidence by the investigator and that my identity will be protected in the publication of any findings.

Name

Signature

Date

Please note: if you have a concern about any aspect of your participation or any other queries please raise this with the investigator. However if you would like to contact an independent party please contact the Director of Studies or the Head of Department.

Director of Studies Contact Details:

Name: Dr. Julie Shaughnessy
University Address:
Roehampton University,
Roehampton Lane,
London SW15 5PU

Head of Dept Contact Details:

Name: Marilyn Holness
University Address:
Roehampton University,
Roehampton Lane,
London SW15 5PU

Appendix 8: Sample Consent Form – Year 9 Pupils

**ETHICS BOARD
PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM**

Dear pupil,

You have been selected to take part in an interview about what it is like to be a pupil in a school with a record of high achievement. One of your teachers will be present throughout the interview and has helped with the arrangements, with the agreement of your Headteacher. You will be asked some questions about the curriculum at your school and how you are supported in your learning. Your answers will be treated in the strictest confidence. Your identity will not be revealed at any point in the research and your school's name will remain secret. You are very welcome to withdraw at any time. An outline of the project is given below. Please ask the investigator if you have any further questions.

Thank you very much in advance for the time you have spent on this activity today!

Title of Research Project:

Nurturing high achievement amongst gifted and talented secondary age boys and girls

Brief Description of Research Project:

This piece of research seeks to identify both the academic and pastoral requirements of pupils in the middle years of secondary education. It also aims to consider how schools can address these in the light of the research findings and the results of related research activity in other settings. Data will be collected primarily from focus group interviews with pupils, a questionnaire survey and a review of the relevant literature.

Investigator Contact Details:

Name: John Weeds

School: Education

University address:

Roehampton University, Roehampton Lane, London SW15 5PU

Consent Statement:

I agree to take part in this research, and am aware that I am free to withdraw at any point. I understand that the information I provide will be treated in confidence by the investigator and that my identity will be protected in the publication of any findings.

Pupil name:

Signature:

Date:

Appendix 9: Sample Consent Form – Headteachers

ETHICS BOARD

PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS - HEADTEACHER CONSENT FORM

Dear LLLL

I am writing to request permission formally to conduct research in your school in support of my project towards a doctoral degree at Roehampton University. I set out below the title and focus of the project. I wish to assure you that Ethical Approval for this project has been approved by the University following a rigorous assessment of the safeguarding and ethical arrangements. First and foremost is the guarantee of anonymity of your school and students and an assurance that my CRB paperwork is in order and available for viewing. All interviews will be conducted in the presence of a member of your staff. All participants will be informed of the purpose of the interviews and asked to sign a consent form. Parents will also be informed of the research by letter and offered an opportunity for their son's/daughter's contribution to be withdrawn.

Thank you in advance for your support.

Title of Research Project: Nurturing high achievement amongst gifted and talented secondary age boys and girls

Brief Description of Research Project:

This piece of research seeks to identify both the academic and pastoral needs of gifted and talented pupils in the middle years of secondary education. It also aims to consider how schools can address these needs in the light of the research findings and the results of related research activity in other settings. Your school has been chosen because of its high level of performance and the high proportion of Gifted and Talented pupils as defined by criteria published by the National Association of Gifted and Talented Youth (NAGTY) and endorsed by the DfE. Data will be collected primarily from focus group interviews with pupils, a questionnaire survey and a review of the relevant literature.

Investigator Contact Details:

Name: John Weeds

School: Education

University address: Roehampton University, Roehampton Lane, London SW15 5PU

Consent Statement:

I agree for my school to take part in this research, and am aware that I am free to withdraw at any point. I understand that the information I and my students provide will be treated in confidence by the investigator and that my school's identity will be protected in the publication of any findings.

Name

Signature

Date

Appendix 10: Interview Schedule for Staff, Study One

Student Support Staff interviews – w/c 11/10/10

Interviewee:.....

Date:.....

Resources: portable tape-recorder

1. Purpose of the interview:

- To gather data about factors affecting the wellbeing of high achieving boys from the perspective of student support specialists, with particular reference to episodes from your own professional experience.
- To develop a detailed enough picture to be able to provide teachers, pastoral carers and other researchers with suggestions for improved practice.
- To assist in the design of methods to be used in active research with secondary age boys at a later date, by listening to experienced practitioners.

2. Ethical assurance:

- You are guaranteed anonymity throughout the research, write-up and dissemination phases of this project.
- The identity of any pupils you refer to in your responses will not be disclosed.
- The raw data from this interview will be stored securely on a home PC, then destroyed on completion of the project.
- Please ask if you want any clarification about the purpose of this research.
- I will write notes as the interview progresses. Do you agree for the interview to be tape recorded and transcripts used in the data analysis phase?
[tick]
- The audio recording will be securely stored and destroyed once the research is complete.

3. Outline of role/job description

Please give an outline of your job description and core purpose.

Question Plan:

1. How long have you been doing the role?

2. What training have you received/training needs have you identified?

3. What range of welfare issues have been referred to you in the past?

4. Who has referred these students to you and on what grounds?

5.

- a) What is the evidence that the boys referred to you are high achievers?
- b) If this is the case, does this fact have an impact on the wellbeing of such boys?
- c) If so, how?

6. How would you rate the quality of the relationship between boys referred to you and the following others:

- Peers 1 (very supportive) 2 (positive) 3(neutral) 4 (negative) 5 (very unhelpful)
- Parents 1 (very supportive) 2 (positive) 3(neutral) 4 (negative) 5 (very unhelpful)

•Teachers 1 (very supportive) 2 (positive) 3(neutral) 4 (negative) 5 (very unhelpful)
In your experience, which of these is the most significant relationship and why? (Probe:
Have you any evidence of other significant relationships with individuals not included
on this list?)

7.

- a) Have you had repeat referrals?
- b) Why do you think these occurred?

8.

- a) How have external agencies been involved, if at all?
- b) How effective was their involvement? (Give an example to illustrate.)

9. In the main how have the pastoral issues you have dealt with been resolved in the past?

- 10. a) What approaches do you use in supporting boys referred to you?
- b) Do you think the pastoral care of high achieving boys requires a specialised (particular) approach? If so, how?

11. What other issues do you think from your experience of caring for high achieving boys could be usefully investigated in the course of this research?

Interviewer:.....

Appendix 11: Interview Schedule for Pupils, Study One

Proposed questions and underlying theoretical constructs

Section 1 - Factual and icebreaker

About You and Your School

1. Which Year Group do you belong to? What are your favourite subjects? Are you preparing for any exams/making GCSE options this year?
2. What do you enjoy doing outside the classroom?
3. Do you support any football (other?) teams? How about favourite films?

Section 2 Questions about experience of Teaching and Learning

1. What are your favourite lessons? Why is this? What do the teachers do that is different?
2. Do you think they think of you as very able? What makes you think this?
3. Can you describe a lesson or part of one which really challenges you?
4. What about the school as a whole? Is it interested in more than your academic potential? How do you know?
5. Are there lessons which are not about subjects purely and simply? Do you enjoy these? Why/Why not?
6. Does the school help you to study more effectively? How does it do this? Does this work, do you think?
7. What do you think about the idea of competition? Good thing/bad thing? Explain answer.
8. Where does competition come into your experience of school? Does it help get good results? Can it do any harm?
9. If you could give any advice to your teachers about technique in the classroom, what would it be? Why would you suggest this?
10. Imagine you were a teacher with a class of gifted and talented learners. What would you do to bring the best out in them?

Section 3 Questions about support from the family and the source and effect of aspirations

1. How much preparation for exams do you do?
2. What grades are you expecting to achieve?
3. What for you is the purpose in achieving these? What do you want to go on and do?

4. Why do you want to follow this career/academic route? (Job? Sibling? Parent advice? Interest? Vocation? Teacher influence?)
5. Do you feel under any pressure to achieve good results? Can you describe? Where does this come from?
6. How do you deal with this pressure?
7. Does the school help you in this process of preparing for exams/dealing with pressure? How?
8. What about friends? Do they have a role to play? If so, how?
9. Do your parents get involved? How about homework? Are you organised yourself? Or does someone encourage you to do this?
10. Have you or anyone you know had negative experiences of dealing with work pressure?

Section 4 Questions about the effect of being a boy/girl and of being defined as Gifted and Talented in a high achieving school

1. From your experience do boys and girls have different attitudes to school work? In what way?
2. What is the attitude to other boys/girls to study? Is it cool/acceptable?
3. Do boys have negative views about particular subjects? School in general/ Why is this?
4. Do you know what I mean by gifted and talented? Have you ever been described in this way? How do you feel about this?
5. What does your school do for the gifted and talented? Is this different from what is done for other pupils? In what way? Does it work/ what do you think it is meant to achieve? Are there any problems with this approach?
6. Do you ever do activities with girls from other schools? If so, what?
7. Would you like to do more? Why?
8. Would you like to be a boy/girl labelled gifted and talented in another school? If so why/why not? So you know anyone in this situation? What do you think it has been like for them?
9. Is there anything your school could do to help Gifted and Talented pupils even more?
10. Do you think it is important for schools generally (the government?) to have an approach on this issue?

Staff and Resources:

- School's Gifted and Talented Coordinator
- Portable tape-recorder (Blackberry with Bluetooth)

Notes at Interview:

Appendix 12: Interview Schedule for Staff, Study Two

Draft interview schedule for Teaching Staff/Middle Managers – September 2011

1. Please outline your role in relation to gifted and talented pupils in your school.
2. How in practice do you support gifted and talented pupils?
3. What factors, if any, inhibit their performance at school in your experience?
4. What do they enjoy most about school and what, if anything, gets in the way of this?
5. What are the most effective forms of support for these students? (How does this differ from your school's SEN provision? How is it alike?)
6. What do you think the pupils and their parents are hoping to achieve? (Does this help or hinder the pupils? If so, how?)
7. What could be done, internally or externally to the school, to improve the support for gifted and talented pupils?
8. Are there any specific issues affecting G and T pupils in your experience?
9. Do you have any further comments or observations?

Draft interview schedule for Headteachers – September 2011

1. Summarise your vision for your school and the Gifted and Talented pupils within it.
2. How do you identify Gifted and Talented learners?
3. What are the key internal systems in this school for enabling G and T pupils to fulfil their potential? (Are there any obstacles to this process?)
4. What for you are the key external issues? (Do you have a personal take on the demise of NAGTY and the effectiveness of other organisations in this field?)
5. At what point would you regard the characteristics of the G and T Learner as a need? What would you do about this?

6. In your experience, what most often prevents G and T pupils achieving their potential?
7. How significant a factor is the school's relationship with the parents of Gifted and Talented pupils?
8. Do you have any further comments or questions?

Appendix 13: Interview Schedule for Parents, Study Two
Focus Groups – Year 9 Parents
“Nurturing high achievers at Key Stage 3 in Secondary Schools”

[Schools A C and D only]

1. *What do you want for your son or daughter from the teaching and learning provided by this school?*
2. *What are you expecting your son or daughter to achieve at 16 yrs. (GCSE), 18 (A-level/IB) and 21?*
3. *How do you support your son or daughter’s learning at home?*
4. *What more do you think the school could or should be doing to support your son or daughter, given their high level of academic potential?*
5. *Is there anything you think you might do differently in the light of your experiences as a parent of a high achieving child at KS1/2/3?*
6. *What advice, again in the light of your experiences as a parent, would you give about parenting or schooling to:*
 - a. *teachers and school leaders*
 - b. *parent*

Appendix 14: Interim IPA analysis, Pupil Interview Transcript

Interview data analysis - identification of sub- and constituent themes from Pupil Group Interviews in the Case Study Schools (IPA model)
RQ1 Experience of Teaching and Learning

RQ	Key Theme	Emergent Sub-Theme	Code ¹	Further Constituent Themes	Code ²	Selected interview transcript data	Interpretative comment
RQ1	Experience of Teaching and Learning	1. Enjoyment	1.1	Subject characteristics	1.1.a	Subject content (- fun and/or challenge): School B: TS1 48-52, 256-7 TS2 30-1, 34-5, 50-52, 318-9, 327-9 TS3 117-21, 398-9 School C: TS1 13-20, 318-22 TS2 14-16, 67-8, 73-8 TS3 14-15, 22 School D: TS1 12-14, 28-31, 37-40, 59-63, 67-9	nb how difficult/challenging work is welcomed, as at Scl C TS2 73-8
						Kinaesthetic/tactile/creative: School B: TS1 182-3, 205-6, 209, 212-4 TS2 144-5, 162-3, 182-3, 186-96, 209-10, 280-1 TS3 32-3, 39-40 School C: TS1 TS2 9, TS3 School D: TS1	nb self-deprecating comment at Scl B TS2 - 189 n.b. also theme of investigation (Doing things from scratch) - also popular - at Scl B TS2 280-2
					1.1.b	Teacher behaviour: School B: TS1 182-3, 192-3 TS2 257-62 TS3 117-21, 125-6, 144-6, 149-50, 153-4, 157-61, 164-6, School C: TS1 42-7, 73-84, 116-20, 129-35, 140-4, 292-7 TS2 84-8, 114-20, 123-6, 129 TS3 47-52, 56-60, 70-1, 83-7, 90-3, 211-2 School D: TS1 75-8, 81,	nb how participants wanted fun and challenge, but also teachers who could police the boundaries, as at Scl C TS2 129 nb ref to current affairs at Scl C TS3 56-60 - bit of preoccupation noted by SENCO in staff f-ys at Scl C
			1.2	Influence of teacher	1.2.a	Helpful/unhelpful: School B: TS1 58-60, 90-1, 97-100, 224-7, 261-2 TS2 139-41 TS3 171-4, 178-9, 182-3, 185-9, (195-67), 245 School C: TS1 51-2, 73-84, 129-35, 184-8 TS2 104-7, 146-52 TS3 School D: TS1	n.b. emphasis on "never forgetting" Classics teaching at Scl C TS1 51-2 nb another reference to fun and "puzzles" (cf investigations at Scl B) at Scl C TS1 184-88 nb group work is strongly approved of as at Scl C TS2 157-65
					1.2.b	Classroom activity: School B: TS1 224-7 TS2 156-7 TS3 School C: TS1 89-93, 106-12, 121-3, (177-80), TS2 96-7, 114-20, 138-43, 146-52, 157-65, 171-8 TS3 122-6, 132-5 School D: TS1 83-7, 97-100	n.b. emphasis on "thinking" - this sensation is obviously enjoyable, but apparently quite rare! Nb the issue of "more" rather than "different" work for G and T occurs as at Scl C TS2 96-7 Also nb, preoccupation with memory as at Scl D TS1 97-100
			1.3	Resources	1.3.a	Use of technology: School B: TS1 106-7, 214-7, 476-80 TS2 202-6, 213-4, 235 TS3 209-10, 213-6, 242-5, 357-60 School C: TS1 TS2 TS3 School D: TS1	n.b. numerous refs to MyMaths - a popular resource because of the independence it affords and proximity to virtual world of pupils socially

Appendix 15: Pupil selection criteria

Process for the selection of participants in Focus Group interviews on the wellbeing of Gifted and Talented secondary pupils

The aim of the Focus Group interview is to elicit a range of responses to questions focussed on the pupils' experience of the curriculum and pastoral support they have experienced. Year 9 is the target group because: this is a critical year of transition from KS3 to KS4 and the GCSE curriculum in both schools (check?); pastoral experience suggests this is the year when most wellbeing issues emerge; other similar studies have focussed on this cohort, usually from the perspective of underachievement.

Both Case Study schools are single sex boys and selective. Thus in general they admit boys who have achieved an Average Points Score (APS) at Key Stage 2 of 33 (the equivalent of 3 x Level 5s in English, Maths and Science in KS2 SATs). This compares with the national average of 28 pts. Because the research is focussed on the wellbeing of the highly able, the sample to be selected should enable further focus to be aimed at a subset of the wider school population. This may appear problematic, given that the Year 7 intake in both schools is drawn from the top quartile approximately of the ability range nationally. A random sample from within the Year 9 cohort as a whole would have its merits, especially given the constraints of time and resources, but a subset of the very highest achievers from within the cohort is being sought. It is vital for the integrity of the project as a whole however that a rigorous focus on those who fulfil the recognised criteria for categorisation as Gifted and Talented (NAGTY Eligibility Criteria 2006). In addition then to an APS of 33+ at KS2, pupils selected should be predicted a Level 8 in KS3 SAT Maths and an APS of 500+ at GCSE (the equivalent of 8-9 A* grades at GCSE). Equally important will be the weight given to teacher nominations. These should give the following information:

- a) Confirmation of the pupil's academic potential;
- b) Indication of whether the pupil is above/below/in line with academic expectations;
- c) Indication as to whether the pupil is suited to a Focus Group activity of this nature.

The rationale for b) and c) is to ensure that the group is heterogeneous in terms of current academic performance (b)). (It is not considered helpful to have all high fliers who are fulfilling their expectation currently – but a mix of achievement levels will help “stimulate and enrich the discussion” (Robson 2003: 286). Likewise, teachers involved in the nomination process will make recommendations on suitability for interviews focussed on wellbeing, taking account of considerations such as ability to articulate thoughts about the pastoral system of the school – support outside the classroom, support versus bullying, sanctions and rewards and encouragement of

aspiration. The aim again is to facilitate rich discussion from a vibrant group rather than focus on any one individual with possible ethical risks resulting.

A final stage in the selection process will consist of letters seeking consent to go ahead both from parents and pupils. This will make clear the purpose of the Focus Group interview and the research as a whole. It will also make clear that the interviewer is aware of the pupil's academic potential and their current level of performance in relation to this. There is the possibility of losing potential participants at this stage, bearing in mind the experiences of Pomerantz and Pomerantz (2002: 126-7). But it is a risk worth taking to ensure the ethical integrity of the project.

Because of the heterogeneous nature of the Focus Groups it is suggested that an observer attends the interview in addition to the interviewer himself. This will enable a more accurate record to emerge, especially regarding identity of contributors. (See Robson (2003: 288). This is not to be regarded as a means of our inferring "individual phenomena" (op. cit.: 289) what is after all a collective activity, but to ensure that transcription before coded analysis is as accurate and straightforward as possible.

The proposed method follows Pomerantz and Pomerantz (2002) in positing "staged criteria" (op. cit.:4-5) in the selection of participants.

Appendix 16: Case Study school descriptors

School A

School A is a girls' grammar school in the borough of Medway – a unitary authority akin to neighbouring Kent in practising area-wide selection at 11+. It admits a small number of boys in the Sixth Form and has a roll of approximately 1116 pupils. Its Principal is Executive Head of both School A and a local non-selective school and a National Leader of Education (NLE). School A is designated National Support School, sponsored by the National College to sustain a “focus on teaching and learning” and “partnership work”. They are selected because their performance data shows “a consistently high level of attainment and contextual value-added above the national average” (OFSTED 2010a: 4). It has recently converted to Academy status and has acquired Thinking School status from the University of Exeter and prides itself on a diverse Sixth Form curriculum which includes the International Baccalaureate. Typically, 99% of Year 11 pupils achieve 5+ A*-C grades or the equivalent, with the average KS2 score on entry into Year 7 at 32 points. (The national average was 27.4 in 2010 (Raiseonline). Its intake incorporates a wide socio-economic mix, although there are currently no Free School Meals or SEN Statemented pupils on roll. Currently 5% of pupils has English as an additional or second language (DfE 2012a). The average points score at KS4 (GCSE) was 440.5 for high attainers in 2011 (equivalent to 8+ A grades). Of the same year group 88% were classed as high attainers. (i.e. These pupils had achieved above Level 4 – the national average - in English, Maths and Science at KS2 in National Curriculum SAT tests.)

The Headteacher is an active member of the Grammar School Heads' Association (GSHA), through which network the link between the researcher and School A's Gifted and Talented Coordinator came about. The latter became the research assistant during the active phase of the case study work and undertook interviews himself as proxy for the researcher in the home school (School C). The school has specialist status for Music and Maths and Computing. It runs a two year compressed Key Stage 3 curriculum and a three-year Key Stage 4 which gives opportunities for many girls to enter GCSEs early. It practises vertical tutoring, with pupils in Years 7-13 in mixed groups, to provide opportunities for peer mentoring and opportunities for

older students to take on leadership roles. It is expected that Year 13 leavers seek admission to university.

School B

School B was the second selective school in the sample and had also recently fulfilled the criteria to become an Academy. It had an outstanding record in in whole school inspections and regularly achieved 98-99% 5+ A*-C grades at GCSE. It has 1176 pupils on roll, with a small proportion of girls in the Sixth Form. Boys enter the school by means of the Medway 11+ examination system with 83% of the Year 11 cohort in 2011 classed as high attainers. As a proportion of the school population as a whole, 3.1% of pupils have a statement for SEN and a further 7.7% have English as a second or additional language. Just under 3% of pupils are eligible for Free School Meals. Of the Year 11 cohort who took GCSEs in 2011, 10% had English as a second or additional language. The average KS2 points score in entry is 31.6, significantly above the national average of 27.4. At GCSE the average points achieved in 2011 was 420 for high attainers - just above an average of 8 grade As for each candidate.

In 2011 the School was also awarded Teaching School (DfE/National College at www.education.gov.uk/nationalcollege/index/support-for-schools/teachingschools), one of the first hundred schools nationally to achieve the accolade. This was recognition of the school's excellence in teaching and learning practice and brings a responsibility to partner other local schools to help disseminate 'creativity' and 'effectiveness' in the classroom. Here too the Headteacher was Executive Headteacher of a neighbouring non-selective school. A senior leader (Assistant Headteacher) has responsibility for promoting Gifted and Talented provision, monitoring the performance of the highest achievers including Oxbridge aspirants. The Headteacher, who is also Executive Headteacher at a local non-selective secondary school, espouses a policy of enrichment for all pupils as a means of raising standards for all through focussing on the learning needs and capabilities of the highest achievers. Broadly, this is akin to the model of "schoolwide enrichment" promoted and developed by Renzulli (1998) who advocates an inclusive approach to teaching and learning of exceptional quality for all pupils, including the gifted and talented.

School C

This school is the researcher's home school. It is a boys' grammar school of approximately 885 pupils, most of whom enter by means of an 11+ examination into Year 7. A relatively small proportion of the boys attending are boarders. Of the current population 1.2% have a SEN statement or are on the School Action Plus support scheme for lower level difficulties. Approximately 1% are eligible for Free School Meals and 13.7% of the Year 11 cohort in 2011 had English as a second or additional language. It has a Sixth Form of just under 300 students. The expectation is that most boys stay on into the Sixth Form following GCSEs, with virtually all Year 13 leavers going onto Higher Education. In 2010, 22 students gained places at Oxbridge colleges – very close to the average number who apply successfully. The average KS2 points score on entry is 33.3, with 98% of its pupils classed as high attainers. 100% of boys attending achieve 5+ A*-C grades with an average KS4 points score at GCSE of 447.5 (just short of an average of 9 grade As).

The school has recently converted to Academy status and retains specialisms in the Humanities and Science with Maths. Although it has a vertical House system for pastoral management of its pupils, all teaching is carried out by Year Group. There is no formal acceleration, but core subjects such as Mathematics and Science routinely incorporate GCSE content into Key Stage 3 Schemes of Work. Whilst there is no Gifted and Talented Coordinator as such, a senior leader is designated to lead on promoting effective strategies for enhancing performance in the classroom. The SENCO leads the team responsible for student support in the widest sense and is line-managed by a Senior Leader responsible for all aspects of teaching and learning. Answering to her are the two Learning Support Assistants, whose expertise has been grown by the school but which in essence involves either "triage" of those experiencing emotional or other health difficulties or monitoring and support for those who have been referred for either behavioural or academic reasons. Additionally a School Counsellor has been appointed to work onsite one day per fortnight "on loan" from the local counselling agency.

School D

Here the attributes and performance indicators were fundamentally different, resulting from the school's inclusive admissions policy and relatively diverse demographic. In a roll of 803 pupils, 14.6% are SEN statemented or qualify for School Action Plus. A further 28.4% do not have English as their first language and over 15% are eligible for Free School Meals – very close to the national average in 2010 of 15.4% (DfE 2010: Table 3a). It is a Voluntary Aided Roman Catholic faith school serving a community incorporating pockets of deprivation alongside areas of relative affluence. Of its Year 11 cohort in 2011, 24% were classed as low attainers (below Level 4 by the end of Year 6 at primary school), 62% were middle attainers (i.e. at Level 4 by the end of primary schooling) and 14% were high attainers. Findings from the interview process involving School D gifted and talented pupils were therefore to be viewed in a context radically different from the other case study schools. In this school, high attainers were very much in the minority and did not represent the critical mass of pupils as was the case in Schools A, B and C. The average KS2 points score on entry was 26 in 2011, compared with the national average in the same year of 27.4. The school improved its raw attainment at GCSE by an extremely creditable 10% margin in 2011, from 34% 5+ A*-C grades the year before to 43%. The average GCSE points score at GCSE was 397.6 for high attainers, still below the grammar schools, but nevertheless the equivalent of just under 5 straight A grades at GCSE. Of the cohort who achieved these results, 12% were either on Free School Meals or receiving support as looked-after children. The school itself has a specialism in Performing Arts and celebrates its strong Catholic roots. Although founded as recently as 1958, it is viewed locally as a school with a distinctive tradition shaped by a commitment to spiritual teaching and a strong Catholic ethos. Aside from the need for variety in the sample and the opportunities afforded by the researcher's professional network, it would be interesting to note what impact the singular attributes of School D would have on the findings from the interview process.

Appendix 17: Pupil interview extracts sorted by theme

Box 6.1 Sample responses from Pupil Group Interview Experience of Teaching and Learning

(Study One)

When you are under pressure in Art, you can kind of enjoy yourself when you are doing your painting even though you know you've got to get it done. School A Transcript 2.409-11

We did a video about how the essays were planned which made it funny, but we still learnt all the stuff we could, so we could all get involved. But we learnt everything and remember it because it was funny. School A, Transcript 3.277-9

(Study Two)

What I find helps is if I try and make it logical like a puzzle where you try and find patterns or something that makes it easier to teach... School C, Transcript 1.185-6

Some of our drama lessons ... I have always enjoyed doing improvisation rather than scripted things ... such as the pantomime. Was this for a show? No just an in class thing. A pantomime thing – it was atrocious, but fun! What was challenging about it? Making up everything because we had to make up storylines, the characters, we had to come up what props we were going to do. We had to start from scratch. School B, Transcript 2.182-96

My favourite lesson is probably Dance – and PE – because they are the more practical lessons where we get more freedom in the lessons, where the teacher gives us the overall task and then we get to progress by ourselves... School D, Transcript 1.28-31

In our lessons he would try and make us find examples of (racist) things like the Holocaust or segregation in America in the 1960s and we would tell them to him, and he would say no, that's not racist... so he would argue on the wrong side of it, but at the end of the lesson, he would say, "boys these things are racist and you have got it wrong, they are racist – don't just say OK..." School C, Transcript 1.130-5

It's another Drama lesson and it was not long ago and we were working on Blood Brothers and I remember it so well I can even remember some of the lines in it and one for the final scenes where they were about to kill each other and I can remember acting it out. School D, Transcript 1.97-100

I think he just really interacted with the class, like most of the time he ended up standing on a table in the corner of the classroom... School C, Transcript 1.117-8

We were talking about earlier the Drama one where we were improvising and our teacher Mr. S, said something about we were on X Factor and he started singing and dancing and it makes it memorable because it is really weird – you remember exactly what you were doing because it was interesting. School D, Transcript 1.75-8

Box 6.2 Sample responses from Pupil Group Interviews**School Systems and Pupil Support****(Study One)**

I remember in Year 8 ... I got in a major stress and had exhaustion and the school offered me pastoral care to help me with it. So they offered organisation ... because we have learning mentors and that was a good way of dealing with it. School A, Transcript 1.342-6

I do get very stressed when exams are coming up because I always think I'm revising the wrong things and there's a that I've forgotten and the worst thing is that I don't have any way of dealing with it. School A, Transcript 1.340-2

It's (target grades) just annoying. We might think they are inaccurate – maybe that they have set things too high for your ability. Everyone's target grades are, like, A-A and we're, like, whoops! School A, Transcript 2.271-2*

(Study Two)

It's not a case of different work; it's a case of more work. School C, Transcript 2.96

Well – you get work and you do it, you get work and you do it – it doesn't feel personalised. If a person needs an extension... we don't really get extensions in this school.

School C, Transcript 3.219-21

They say you are gifted and talented, but they don't build on that more, they just say that and leave it. School D, Transcript 1.107-8

I don't personally feel it is a good idea to do them (GCSEs) in Year 9. Because my brother did a few in the middle of Year 10 and at that point it was seen as "What are they doing? That's pathetic!" And now we come in and are doing them straight from Year 9 – its crazy!

School D, Transcript 1.262-5

I think that when you work in groups you push yourself a bit further and also competition within the class is good because its friendly and it pushes people further because of they know someone else is just as good as them, they can work together.. School C, Transcript 1.161-4

I think one of the clubs – academic support club. It's on once a week and really helps students... someone who's at a higher level, A-level student or GCSE who are having the same experience as you and they can talk to you ... even if I'm quite good at French I can still learn a lot from it.

School B, Transcript 1.271-5

When they say Gifted and Talented, it is more of a status sometimes. And also some teachers, they take time out of their own time and help some students as well when others don't.

School D, Transcript 1.112-4

Some people don't want to do it because it happens a lot because say if you go into something extra, you are then called a 'bodrick'. You are teased about it and you get more afraid of doing it because of what people will say. School D, Transcript 1.149-51

Box 6.3 Sample responses from Pupil Group Interviews

Aspiration and Anxiety

(Study One)

The school expects you to do well. School A, Transcript 1.318

Is it cool here to be into learning? I guess, because this school doesn't really tolerate being brash and catty. School A Transcript 1.378-9

I think we are all in the same boat really – we all feel the pressure to succeed... School A, Transcript 1.381-2

What about their (pupils at other schools) attitude to you? I would guess that sometimes it would be OK, but other times it will be 'Oh, she's smarter than us – so you can't be around us any more, because we are happy where we are. We don't want to be boffins.' School A, Transcript 3.404-9

My parents just say to do your very best and they don't put me under pressure. They just try and help me if I am under pressure. They would just help me and help me through it. School A, Transcript 2.362-4

I live in MS and my friends get my bus and ... one time we were talking about homework and I told them about mine and they were like "Bloody hell!" Does it make you feel good that you've got that kind of homework here? No – it shows I haven't got a life! School A, Transcript 2 432-4

(Study Two)

*What do you see as a realistic target for your GCSEs? A*s and As really. I think on the whole that Bs and Cs are almost frowned upon. Teachers only ever talk about As and A*s. We can still get a C, but they are kind of psyching everyone up for As and A*s. School C, Transcript 1.219-221 and 228-30*

*And what about the grades you would be expecting to achieve? I am hoping to get at least 10 A*s – That would be very good! What about the rest of you? My target is actually half his! I was only going for 5 A*, as I didn't want to go too far and be disappointed, but not go far enough and not be challenged. School B, Transcript 2.338-345*

*My parents will be disappointed if I got D, but my sister hasn't done her GCSEs yet but she is predicted A*s in all her subjects and sort of like I am in her shadows and I have high expectations and there is a point where I will be very disappointed if I do not get an A*.. School C, Transcript 1.227-30*

I think my parents are pretty relaxed about it. They encourage me and if I do get a bad grade, question it and ask for an explanation. School C, Transcript 3.243-5

Box 6.4 Sample responses from Pupil Group Interviews**Potential Inhibitors (Study Two only)**

In primary school if I got top marks, people at the back of the room would sigh ... and it got a bit embarrassing. At my primary school you would never have teased the person who came at the bottom, it was always teasing the person at the top. School C, Transcript 1.341-6

I think there is a realisation, the people who do well in school are going to have a better future than those who are, like, "I'm cool – yeah – I got 14% in Maths..." Who cares?

School C, Transcript 1.349-51

Some people work too hard and everyone thinks it's a bit odd. ... There are lots of people in our school who will always get answers right and spend all weekend on their homework. And they're all friends within their group. School C, Transcript 1.391-4

I mean even the popular ones here are smart people, so it doesn't really make a difference, as opposed to in other schools. I mean if you can compromise and are doing well and actually being social, that's really key, especially here. School C, Transcript 1.335-7

I think if you do well, people may think badly of you, if you do well. In this school, they seem to admire you.. Well, I have heard of other schools where people get bullied for being smart.

School B, Transcript 1.453-4 and 460

I think because here we all work hard, we all can get on. Here, working hard can also lead to you being cool I guess. You can work hard and have a social life. School C, Transcript 1.362-3

In Years 7 and 8 I didn't have a social life... I didn't really go into town, didn't really talk with people outside my class, didn't really go outside. In Year 9 I kind of got fed up with this. I took up people and got friends through that. I think I'm quite funny. School C, Transcript 1.353-7

Well, there is a balance because there is two different types of people here – there's the people who have got a great attitude to learning and they are the people who generally have the most friends. And then there are the people who do very well and are – I don't like to say this – kind of personality-less – just going and doing well. School B, Transcript 3.364-8

What I want to know first of all is whether it's cool to study and do well academically here? No! (Unanimous) Do you want to take that any further anyone? Most of my friends hang out with the wrong crowd and most of my friends think it's really stupid to do well and they think they are all hard and they think it's hard to mess around and - I'm not saying names - and they're just sat there like, and I'm like, "I actually have to go home and study." And they're like, "Hello? Mess around!" ***School D, Transcript 1.369-77***

There is a competitive nature between the students at the school to do better than someone so they revise harder and the grades in every vase will go up ... So that really helps drive your standards? People do really want to do better ... In Physics, everyone has got good grades at the moment and passed the Lads' Physics. Who are the Lads again? If you do well you get to become honorary members of that group. School B, Transcript 2.432-42

Appendix 18: Staff interview data from the Case Study schools sorted by theme

Box 7.1 Sample responses from Staff 1:1 Interviews - Teaching and Learning (Study One)

They respect each other's geeky knowledge. One boy gets a lot of respect for his Maths.

LSA, School C, Transcript 1.102ff

(E.) does not feel qualified but he has a real feel for this area. He went and did some research on it. He has developed his own booklet on Asperger's. This helped to make it clear to other people. Things like non-eye-contact. The LA now uses this. He's flagged things like highly developed sensory perception. SENCO, School C, Transcript 2.229-34

Whenever Dad comes, he has this approach, y'know – "Have you got your books?" One day ... he brought him back. The child was still in pain. The father said, "I want him to go off to his Biology lesson." LSA, School C, Transcript 3.162-66

What is the evidence that the boys referred to you are bright? *We use grades from the progress reports. One boy is in the Royal Academy and another composes music for computer games. What about their behaviours?* *The way the Year 10 boy runs the games – it's just so organised. You only have to look at their computer skills. They play amazing Dingbats. They can calculate Pi to 50 or even 80 decimal places.* **LSA, School C, Transcript 1.86-92**

(Study Two)

The mission statement for the school is: 'support, encourage, achieve'. And that's the case for all students, whether they're gifted and talented or anyone else. ..

Headteacher, School A, Transcript 1.6-7 and 9-10

At the very heart of our mission is that these very successful young people will go into the world as leaders.. **Headteacher, School B, Transcript 1.10-12**

So let's make the educational menu so varied, so engaging that everyone becomes gifted and talented – because in a sense it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy that you say: "You are a gifted and talented child so we are going to give you this great provision... If that engaging exciting provision is available for everybody, then you would be in a sense doubling or tripling the number of children.... sometimes we don't really know what we mean by "G and T".

Headteacher, School B, Transcript.168-73

What we offer here is an academic, a spiritual, a creative, a sporting and an inclusive education. **Headteacher, School D, Transcript 1.6-7**

So they all have a personal "apex" – there's something they are personally best at for themselves. ..they have to develop that passion as much as the most able have to as well.

Headteacher, School A, Transcript 1.112-4

I don't think high expectations and high achievement are necessarily exclusive of happiness.

Headteacher, School B, Transcript 1.31-2

Box 7.2 Sample responses from Staff 1:1 Interviews School Systems & Pupil Support (Study One)

Often they feel that their best is not good enough. This is brought into the open through counselling. I say to them, "Do you really think you can do better than your best?"

School Counsellor, School C, Transcript 4.87-88

We have found on more than one occasion that you will have a conversation with a parent and you can have notes from the meeting that this (Child Mental Health referral) will go ahead and they will withdraw because it looks quite frightening. SENCO, School C, Transcript 2.65-9

The.. role consists of supervision of the Study Room – it's a safe place for students to go at lunchtime for one-to-one mentoring and student support. Especially for the Asperger's's boys, this is a space away from the noise and hustle and bustle of the Form room.

LSA, School C, Transcript 1.17-24

(Study Two)

I said.. we weren't going to give a TLR (management allowance) for that (G and T Coordinator role) any more, we were actually going to put the TLR into Intervention, but more so for the C/D borderline. So we don't actually have a Gifted and Talented Coordination as from this year...Key Stage Coordinator, School D, Transcript 3.10-13

So, I do think that provision (G and T) – if we want to do it properly as a school – and I think it would be a great investment, because you raise the bar for everybody if you raise it for gifted teachers. But it's just not where the school is at the moment.

Key Stage Coordinator, School D, Transcript 3.205-7

I know of a lot of schools who have simply made their G and T Coordinator redundant and they're not doing it any more. Assistant Headteacher, School B, Transcript 3.143-4

Up until 18 months ago we did comply with the prevailing regulations .. to keep a G and register. So we had this register. What we found challenging – but what do you do with those students that's different (from the rest)? So issues of inclusion come into it ...

Headteacher, School B, Transcript 1.37-41

I don't think there is a place for (external G and T organisations) and I don't think there has been one. It's been pretty piecemeal. There was YGT that seemed to do some good stuff.

NAGTY? I don't know what they achieved.

Assistant Headteacher, School B, Transcript 3.128-30

What was it that those organisations (NAGTY, YGT etc.) strove to do...? Ultimately they were all trying to achieve ... engagement. Engagement leading to higher achievement and higher achievement leading to more of our children becoming concert pianists or elite sportsmen... engineers, scientists ... So, let's develop the elite. Other countries are not shy about developing elite. Headteacher, School B, Transcript 1.50-56

Box 7.3 Sample responses from Staff 1:1 Interviews**Aspiration and Anxiety****(Study One)**

Is there a stigma (about mental health referral)? I think – a little bit of a stereotype – the higher achieving parents we have think its going to appear on UCAS or stop them going to Oxbridge. Which is obviously not true. SENCO, School C, Transcript 2.72-4

There are students whose parents think they are not achieving... The teachers go to some lengths and say, look, he's absolutely fine. He is achieving – these are the levels. National Curriculum levels help. SENCO, School C, Transcript 2.152-4

(Study Two)

But if you don't do the work required to stay in the Oxbridge group, then you're out. It's a case of "Look if you want this, that's got to be what it's all about. You have the potential to do it. You want to do it. Great! We provide the opportunity, we provide the guidance, we provide the pathway. If you're not prepared to do the hard yards, we can't do them for you.

Headteacher, School A, Transcript 1.143-49

It would be fanciful to say when they come into Year 7 that it is an equal playing field, it's not. Because those other children have all the advantages of what having a supportive family home means and these other children don't. So we have to make up ground for those.

Headteacher, School B, Transcript 1.24-32

And what advice should they (the G and T) get and not other students?

Headteacher, School B, Transcript 1.41-2

So Apex P has been brought in because all my students are gifted and talented in the end.

Headteacher, School B, Transcript 1.109-111

So they all have a personal "apex" – there's something they are personally best at for themselves. ...they have to develop that passion as much as the most able have to as well.

Headteacher, School B, Transcript 1.112-4

So I think it's really incumbent on us to look after those children, to monitor them, not to lower expectations from them, but to recognise that it is not the same for them, they don't go home to a family that says, here is your nice quiet study room or let's have a talk about politics round dinner. Headteacher, School B, Transcript 1.152-5

They (the Apex/G and T students) feel celebrated for being the best rather than isolated and outside their peer group. Headteacher, School A, Transcript 1.130-2

Well, we have to be careful that the drive for higher standards can roll over some children and they can get trampled on ... Headteacher, School B, Transcript 1.136-7

Box 7.4 Sample responses from Staff 1:1 Interviews – Potential Inhibitors**(Study One)**

With Asperger's's, clear instructions are essential. LSA, School C, Transcript 1.46

The key is communication – I have created a booklet on Asperger's's which staff have found useful... LSA, School C, Transcript 1.142-3

There might be slightly different needs – much more on an emotional level. Sometimes it's ... those that I would term frightening ... the ones that I think could actually go on to cause themselves or other people harm... Something that's come out over the last year is the increasing number of students self-harming. SENCO, School C, Transcript 2.38-47

We have students who have depression. And self-harming – that's just what they are doing, but its finding out why. SENCO, School C, Transcript 2.94-5

The EP is really under pressure. She does three or four other schools on the day she is in. LSA, School C, Transcript 1.136-8

(Study Two)

As such there isn't an integrated programme for Gifted and Talented.

Key Stage Coordinator (ex-G and T), School D, Transcript 3.21-22

My focus now is that we are part of the PicsL [literacy aid for weak pupils] group of schools. .. This means looking much more closely at the interventions we are doing in our schools four our [GCSE grade]D/C student Key Stage Coordinator (ex-G and T), School D, Transcript 3.37-40

Can you tell me of any factors which might inhibit the performance of gifted and talented pupils? *It would be the sense of being identified in a school that isn't highly academic...could be difficult from the students' perspective.*

Key Stage Coordinator (ex-G and T), School D, Transcript 3.48-51

Particularly able students sometimes do suffer from this fixed thing where they think, "I'm about to be found out at any minute. I'm not really that bright as they think I am." And they are terrified of getting a low score and that they will plummet down some hill. And that's a real issue, I think, for able learners. Headteacher, School B, Transcript 1.261-4

A second factor is in the end that desire to be one of your peers. And that's true of human nature everywhere. Standing out from the pack can be difficult. So it's about providing opportunities for students to stand out, but in a way in which they feel comfortable and in a way they feel empowered, rather than being put on the spot and uncomfortable.

Headteacher, School A, Transcript 1.94-98

Appendix 19: Parent interview data from Case Study schools C and D

Box 8.1 Sample responses from Parent Focus Groups

Experience of Teaching and Learning

What you are looking for from the teaching is inspirational teachers who provide not just the National Curriculum, but challenge and take the boys to a different place... And I think that you want them to take them beyond their existing thinking.

Parent Focus Group, School C, Transcript 1.13-16

(My son) did have a timetable for the exams. The first day he had Geography there. 20 minutes later he came downstairs and said, "I've done Geography." I said, "Oh? What topic?" "I've done all of it." Parent Focus Group, School C, Transcript 1.143-7

School Systems and Pupil Support

Sometimes schools put children in for GCSE early when they are keen to support the G and T. Like I say, E. did hers early and she got an A, 4 Bs and a C. But that could swing the other way too. If she hadn't done well that could have knocked her entire confidence.

Parent Telephone Interview, School D, Transcript 2.99-103

Aspiration and Anxiety

*I believe she is capable of doing it ... I still think she can still do all As and A*s, if she wants to. I understand her predicted grades are all As bar one B.*

Parent Telephone Interview, School D, Transcript 2.16-20

*What are your expectations (for your son)? A*s; As and A*s; realistically I would expect nothing less than a B. If they have aspirations to go to university, then the GCSE results count.*

Parent Discussion Group, School C, Transcript 1.112-6

I think there's the other group (of parents) where you've got a child who's come from a primary school where they stand out very obviously from everyone else and they feel very self-conscious about it – almost don't want to be noticed because they are different. And I think in that case it's good to encourage those parents and say, "Look it's fine ... don't be embarrassed that your child is a high achiever." Parent Focus Group, School C, Transcript 1.178-83

Potential Inhibitors

I think it's important for him to learn how to learn and how to deliver. We feel that he's getting that right. We don't want him turning off and to rebel against the pressure – so we're quite hands off.

Parent Focus Group, School C, Transcript 1.116-20

Do you feel the pressure? Yes I do – the pressure is on. You have to drive a little bit too – they are so young that they may not feel it. However, you are trying to drive it. What can I do? Should I push more? Parent Focus Group, School C, Transcript 1.119-21

1 **Appendix 20: Transcript of interview with the SENCO at School C**

2 **8.30 am 22/10/10**

3 **Interviewer: JW**

4 SR: OK. SENCO. Coordinating the support within school – agencies, the CAT Team,
5 Speech and Language therapists. Probably more in school – Al and Mary – LSAs. Al
6 has had quite an impact – has time, can go into lessons and observe.

7 JW: Probe: Core purpose? Support to enable students to achieve potential and be
8 happy. If they are not happy they do not achieve.

9 JW Probe: Other roles? Teacher of Classics

10 Probe: Compatibility. At times very difficult. The switch between SEN and issues with
11 parents. Managing that – different pressures. Some of the issues with SEN can be quite
12 demanding. More so than in the classroom. Pressures are on the emotional side and the
13 time you have to fit it in. Making up in the classroom. 8 of the 11 this week were on the
14 SEN Register. This week has been really pressurized. I have asked for a bit more on the
15 communications side.

16

17 Peaks and troughs? Some we give support to all the time. One or two on top of that it
18 becomes challenging. More pressure points towards the end of term/half-term.
19 Whether that's people getting tired – the holiday coming up and tidying up loose ends.
20 September can be a challenge – new intake meeting new parents want to meet you and
21 you want to meet them. You discover what needs they want.

22

23 **1. How long have you been doing the role?**

24 Four years.

25 **JW Probe: has it changed much in that time?**

26 It was quite basic at the beginning – in terms of the amount of support. There were
 27 statutory things like a statement – where things have to be done. That’s got to be done.
 28 We have brought it in more in line with other schools. Still a perception – there was
 29 within this school and still in the LA and other schools in particular that because you
 30 have high achieving students you don’t have SEN. And I find that frustrating. They
 31 might be slightly different needs – much more an emotional level. Sometimes its
 32 behavioural – not necessarily the same as a lower achieving school, but those students
 33 still need support – especially those that I would term frightening. The ones that I think
 34 could actually go onto cause themselves or other people harm. Possibly you are more
 35 likely to find those students in a high achieving school – because they are clever – know
 36 how to talk the talk, say certain things to some people .. wind people up. Some of that
 37 seems quite calculated – they know what they’re doing. Something quite worrying.

38 JW Probe: “Frightening “- is that because of the threat to others?

39 SR: On a mental health scale they could do themselves harm. Something that’s come
 40 out over the last year is the increasing numbers of students self-harming.

41 Probe: Is that a national trend, from your conversations and contacts with other
 42 schools? Any evidence or gut feeling?

43 SR: There are trends – an Emo trend. A bit behind the times in some ways. More
 44 striking because it’s boys. Maybe you’d expect girls to be more involved – eating
 45 disorders and so on. We don’t get eating disorders. Mainly it makes sense – it seems to
 46 be because – I have done some mental health training – boys, men don’t talk as much as
 47 girls. So it’s an outlet. It’s not knowing what to do. Possibly in the past we have had a
 48 bit of a stiff upper lip. Oh, they are fine. May be if you look for it.. you find it, I don’t

49 know. It's taken a bit of time. We have started to offer support. It makes a bit more
 50 work. Boys are prepared to take up that support. It's not that they are pretending. It's a
 51 need that's there – may be in the past it was pushed outside – onto university.

52

53 **JW Probe: Which Year Group is most affected?**

54 SR: Towards the end of Year 8. It's mostly middle years – Years 8,9,10

55

56 **JW Probe: What kind of support do you offer?**

57 SR: No.5 counselling service every other week. Which has been very successful. Totally
 58 depends on whether student wants to go. We will often fill in a referral form –
 59 Wokingham it's a Child Mental Health form or a CAF. But we have often found on
 60 more than one occasion that you will have a conversation with a parent and you can
 61 have notes from a meeting that this will go ahead and it will come to the point of them
 62 being contacted with the CAF form and they will withdraw because it looks quite
 63 frightening. And because lots of things are termed under mental health It's a
 64 frightening term for the parent. You end up withdrawing at that point. Because you
 65 can't really go any further.

66

67 JW Probe: Possibly a stigma?

68 SR I think – a little bit of a stereotype – the higher achieving parents we have think it's
 69 going to appear on the UCAS or stop them going to Oxbridge. Which is obviously not
 70 true.

71

72 JW Probe: – You mentioned training ...

73

74 **2. What training have you received/training needs have you identified?**

75 SR: Piecemeal – a bit as and when. What I find hard - There's a lot of jargon. Often what
 76 you do is absolutely right. And you just want someone to confirm that it's right.
 77 There's many time a I have been to SENCO network meeting. That's not official
 78 training – that it is very useful - sometimes it's just primary, sometimes primary and
 79 secondary. They offer some training – child mental health – or annual meetings when
 80 they bring in support from Hometown College the BESD school – there needs to be a
 81 bit more communication – it's more through the networking that you share ideas or
 82 find that you do know enough. I have been to a couple of meetings this week – and
 83 terms have been, well – “Do you do this? Do you do ABC? Do you do PSP?” And
 84 you're kind of “No!” – “Oh, I do do that we just don't call it that! I don't call it what
 85 you call it.” Maybe they're not quite as official – or beyond that we make up strategies
 86 with parents and teachers. Masters courses are now available – it's going to have more
 87 of the academic side to it – more research side to it. There are those won't want to do it –
 88 one of our ladies in school (laugh!). it's a really good thing for SENCOs and SEN in
 89 general – maybe it's more hit and miss. Should raise the standard.

90

91 **3. What range of welfare issues have been referred to you in the past?**

92 SR: Emotional support – a huge term. We have students who have depression. And
 93 self-harming – that's just what they are doing but it's finding out why. There's a
 94 certain number of students whose parent or a close family member is struggling with
 95 an illness. That affects them. Problems at home – there's an assumption that we are a
 96 nice school. Fairly middle class. There's a bit of friction there. But we would feel there

97 are maybe parents who need a bit support – maybe not open to this because they have
98 a high powered, professional job. Child may have certain amount of neglect – perhaps
99 that’s a bit strong.

100 **JW Probe: What is the bit that’s missing?**

101 SR: One student in particular who is seeing the Primary Mental Health Worker just
102 wants his father to be around. His father’s away a lot. And it’s attention that he wants.
103 Causing all sorts of problem in the family unit. And as a school we can support him
104 and are doing all we can do. So the attention-seeking that comes out at school is the
105 result of things at home. But until the problem is solved at home. Until that’s solved –
106 that’s not directly related to the school, but it has a huge impact in school. You need to
107 go outside and look beyond it. The pressure that some of our students feel from their
108 parents. They need to succeed. That can cause real stress. To achieve highly go to the
109 right university and to do the course that makes them look good. Some I have heard
110 about through subject choice. Classical Civilisation as opposed to Latin. There are those
111 perceptions. They must do Latin to be a doctor.

112 **JW Probe: How does this manifest itself?**

113 SR: We get students who are not happy. And their parents think they are not achieving
114 because they are middle of the road here. They are low achieving in our school. But
115 nationally they are very high achievers. We struggle sometimes to share with the
116 students and their parents how they are achieving. We have worked on that recently by
117 bringing in praise postcards. Something we made in SEN last year was positive
118 comment reports.

119 They will take home the impression that they are no good at anything. It’s kind of
120 human nature that you only remember the bad things. And that takes over.

121 Our Year 7s struggle sometimes. They have been top of everything at primary school.
 122 At Year 7 they find that they are not top of everything. And possibly going up the
 123 school they coast a bit. And then the pressure hits and they have to work. They struggle
 124 a bit and don't know what to do or how to handle it. Or perhaps because you are here
 125 you will get the results through a process of osmosis. Doesn't always work. There's a
 126 quite a lot of expectations. Sometimes things get missed in primary school because
 127 students are bright – we have a student here at the moment. He was always told at
 128 primary school that he was very bright and just a naughty child. There seems to be
 129 more to it. Maybe they just saw him as bright and naughty.

130

131 **JW Probe: How did his career at primary go were there issues there?**

132 SR: He was permanently in trouble. His parents were always being called in. He was
 133 sent home on various occasions. It got to the point where his mother felt he was so
 134 unhappy he was going down the route of depression.. His mother was so concerned.
 135 He just turned and said well what's the point? What can I do? I do I just can't behave.
 136 This is a boy who's quite aware. He'll say things like well I did it to get attention. So
 137 he's pretty on the ball. And his mother felt he could be going down the road of
 138 depression. So she took him out and home-schooled him for a term and half at the end
 139 of Year 6. And the biggest thing is the parents. The thing we're successful at. They want
 140 you to listen to them and deal with the individual and just the support through tutor,
 141 coming and having a meeting and being on the phone. They feel that nothing
 142 happened all the years at primary school. And now we were looking at it. Putting it in
 143 a different setting helps. And may be at primary school they get missed – oh they are
 144 bright they are doing really well. And that's where SEN is slightly different here.

145 Because they do have perceptual (?) or literary difficulties ... and you get them here
146 and think: actually they do need support. Actually they do need support –they are not
147 fulfilling THEIR potential. And that’s where it’s about achieving an individual’s
148 potential and not just hitting a base level.

149

150 **JW Probe: How attuned are our teachers to a pupil’s place in the overall scheme of**
151 **things?**

152 SR: We have a bit of a range. Some are very good, some a bit less. They might throw
153 away after school oh, but he’s not very good, he’s not very clever. That’s within that
154 context. We forget sometimes. Maybe some of our teachers don’t always have that
155 experience.

156

157 **JW Probe: Do you have conversations like that with teachers – to put things into**
158 **perspective?**

159 SR: There are students whose parents think they are not achieving, particularly with
160 Science. Some and the teachers go to some lengths to say, look he’s absolutely fine. He
161 is achieving – these are the levels. And it’s all very good. National Curriculum levels
162 help.

163

164 **JW Probe: In what way? Do we do that enough with the boys?**

165 SR: They don’t always realize how good they are. If they actually have to work at
166 something, they think they are not very good. They are not into trying anything where
167 you are going to fail, they won’t try. They want to do things where they get the top
168 mark. They only want the top mark. We have a student who is in danger of not doing

169 well at GCSE (Modestus Y11) because he won't put pen to paper. It got to the point last
 170 year where the Primary Mental Health Worker
 171 thinks there will be severe mental health problems as an adult. The emotional side
 172 needs to be sorted. Until we sort out the emotional side. He cannot connect his
 173 emotions at all. It's a sign of how central emotions are.
 174 Everything is very controlled at home – everything is geared towards the academic and
 175 achieving. Conversations at dinnertime revolve around the academic. He is in danger
 176 now of not achieving.
 177 Another case is Tommy who has threatened all sorts of things. He wasn't achieving at
 178 school. He was alone a lot of the time at home. The Tutor was very good and allowed
 179 him time and space in his room before and after school. Again the parents were a part
 180 of the problem. Putting that structure in place for him really helped. There was a
 181 backing-off period, followed by a more structured approach. He got fantastic results – a
 182 string of As and A*s. Once he'd sorted out his emotional side. We get a couple like that
 183 – Jerry – huge problem in Year 10 and 11.

184

185 **4. Who has referred these students to you and on what grounds?**

186 **JW: How are other staff involved?**

187 SR: We rely on other teachers. They see these students a lot. They might be performing
 188 really well in one area, but underachieving in another. Communications are key.
 189 Achievement levels are important in working out who could be referred. Finding out
 190 why is the next step. Looking at the situation across the board. It's a combination of
 191 people involved. You can always do communication better. We have brought in things
 192 that have helped with this. But the Student Welfare Board is a CAT style group which

193 is about sharing ideas and working out what to do. This is key. You need to bring
 194 people together. The CAT is the LA equivalent. We access the Primary Mental Health
 195 Worker and EP primarily.

196

197 **5. a) What is the evidence that the boys referred to you are high achievers?**

198 There is some of that at the moment.

199 **JW Probe: Would you correlate someone with Asperger's with a gifted area?**

200 Asperger's is frequent. One student (Year 8) is fantastic in certain areas, but he can't be
 201 bothered to read the question. So he is hugely underachieving. He is so articulate and a
 202 talented musician (Royal College of Music etc.). And he can't really concentrate. He
 203 seems to be a little bit bored. When I looked at G and T in my PGCE – there's that real
 204 spark. There's a huge amount to you. Also Harry P in Year 10 – is hugely articulate,
 205 very intelligent. He had a really good understanding of the world and politics. Right
 206 from Year 8 and 9. Maybe he used it in a very weird, slightly worrying way. But this
 207 articulacy can mask emotional issues. We have very intelligent boys, but emotionally
 208 they're years behind other students. They can mask it with intelligence. They can talk
 209 the talk and give you answer that you want. That's why they get frustrated. Sounds
 210 like they should understand because of what they say. But students who think about
 211 the world could cause themselves worry and stress so much more because they over-
 212 analyse. They're analysing society in general and how things fit together. Rather than
 213 on a level where you do the work, then go and play a computer game or play football.
 214 They're really thinking about things, the bigger questions: what is the point? There was
 215 Teddy W. He was in my Tutor Group from Year 7 and he was like: I'm gonna get

216 kicked out of here, then I'm gonna get kicked out of another school. The education
217 system won't know what to do with me. He left and has got himself into trouble.

218

219 **JW Probe: Does this have an impact on their wellbeing?**

220 That summarises a lot of our boys – they can communicate with boys like them. Taking
221 them on school trips, but you are not prepared to go and ask that person a question.

222 Getting that social communication side, is more evident.

223

224 **JW: These very highly articulate , highly intelligent, very knowledgeable boys have**
225 **limited emotional development and this impacts on their wellbeing?**

226

227 SR: Yes, that in a way summarises a lot of our boys. And sometimes taking them out of
228 their environment shows this up. Gosh you're going to get a string of As and A*s, but
229 you won't go and ask that person a question.

230

231 **JW Probe: Is this a gender thing? (Leading question!)**

232 There is a male/female divide on the ASD spectrum. Women are stereotypically more
233 emotional.

234

235 **JW Probe: What do you understand by the ASD spectrum – and the place of**
236 **Asperger's on this? Can it be represented diagrammatically? Textbook definitions?**

237 SR: We have found Aspergic tendencies – it has its own scale – there are certain
238 characteristics. Our own experience mixed with things brought in has helped. When
239 you get to the point of diagnosis there are certain questions and criteria which apply –

240 as with any medical condition. But you learn from the experience of dealing with other
 241 students what the issues are. There are certain things you pick up. Al does not feel
 242 qualified but he has a real feel for this area. He went and did some research on it. He
 243 felt he needed some training and support. He has developed his own booklet re
 244 Asperger's. This helped to make it clear to other people. Things like non-eye contact.
 245 The LA now uses this. He's flagged things like highly developed sensory perception
 246 and that they are exceedingly sensitive. And we see it with our students who struggle
 247 with a very noisy classroom or a smell. William H (Y9) won't wear jeans and Alan L
 248 (Y8) has a thing about orange bubble gum under a desk. He couldn't concentrate on
 249 anything else. It's important to understand this part of the condition and not just a
 250 naughty boy. That's where it's important to have wider awareness.

251

252 **a) If this is the case, does this fact have an impact on the wellbeing of such**
 253 **boys?**

254 **b) If so, how?**

255 **6. How would you rate the quality of the relationship between boys referred to you**
 256 **and the following others:**

257

- 258 • Peers 1 (very supportive) 2 (positive) 3(neutral) 4 (negative) 5 (very unhelpful)
- 259 • Parents 1 (very supportive) 2 (positive) 3(neutral) 4 (negative) 5 (v unhelpful)
- 260 • Teachers 1 (very supportive) 2 (positive) 3(neutral) 4 (negative) 5 (v unhelpful)

261

262 Peers – '2' mostly positive [but also states this is a mixed area...] There are certain
 263 students here who would really suffer in a more mixed comprehensive environment.

264 And would be odd. We deal quite well with odd. Their peers accept them quite well for
265 their eccentricities. But, diagnoses can help. There's one boy we know who we think is
266 getting bullied. If we could tell his peers he has Asperger's. I think that would help the
267 situation much more.

268 Parents – '2' positive – because you get very supportive. Some don't accept the
269 condition.

270 Teachers '2' – positive – some go above and beyond. Some miss it don't quite get the
271 whole picture.

272

273 7.

274 **a) Have you had repeat referrals?**

275 There's a frustration that comes from misunderstanding. Students with Asperger's
276 never get better – we can help, but they will never be "cured".

277

278 10.

279 **a) What approaches do you use in supporting boys referred to you?**

280 I am going on a training activity in Italy with other SENCOs this Half Term.

281

282 **b) Do you think the pastoral care of high achieving boys requires a specialised
283 approach? If so, how?**

284 Yes, I think specialized in the sense that – my specific area is the emotional literacy side
285 that comes with Gifted and Talented. I think there are needs for support. I am going to
286 Italy for training over Half Term with other local SENCOs. They don't have special
287 schools. My focus will be high achievers and the emotional side.

288

289 It's just worth remembering that they are complicated – with the intelligence these
290 boys have. What's more important sometimes is the life skills – I mean they could go on
291 and be really successful, but do we sometimes forget those?

292 **Interview ended: 9.45 am**

293

1 **Appendix 21: Transcript of interview with Y9 Pupils at School C**

2 **8.30 am 22/10/10**

3 **Interviewer: AW**

4 **School C**

5 **Interview 1 – 6th April, 2011**

6

7 [Four Year 9 pupil names inserted here.]

8

9 **AW: Can you tell me your favourite subjects and why do you enjoy it the most?**

10

11 My favourite subject is probably French.

12

13 **AW: What is it about French that you really enjoy?**

14 I haven't really struggled in French

15

16 Art is my favourite subject because I feel in my class there are not that many people

17 that like Art. In other subjects they give you homework and you have to spend time

18 doing them. In Art you can sit in front of the TV, you can do it absent-mindedly. I

19 don't see it as work when I am set a piece of artwork to do. It seems relaxing.

20 Chemistry because it is hands-on, practical and you get a feel for what you're learning

21 about. RS and Music because I've got quite good teachers in RS and he is quite good

22 fun to be around and in music I have a head start because I play a lot of instruments

23 already.

24

25 **AW: What kind of things do you do outside of school?**

26

27 I play flute and piano

28

29 **AW: What grade?**

30

31 I'm grade 2 on flute and 4 on piano

32 I play the flute, I am grade 4 and I play cricket.

33 I play cricket, I am in the school team, and I play electric guitar alot.

34

35 **AW: Who's your hero?**

36

37 I am quite into rock and that style so it would have to be Kurt Cobaine and...

38

39 I used to play clarinet and I play football for the schools team and I usually stay after
40 school as well.

41

42 **AW: In those subjects what are your favourite teachers? What about them makes**
43 **you, as an able student stretched?**

44

45 There's a few teachers I like because they have a personal relationship with you it's not
46 one of those, 'who might you be?' ones, where they don't even know your name. They
47 know more about you than a 'you're just the fourteenth one on the register'

48 Yes, I agree with Billy, and also teachers who will teach you quickly but won't skim
49 over things so they can teach you in depth but still quite quickly so we don't get bored.

50

51 **AW: Can you think of any examples of teachers doing this?**

52

53 Our ... teacher, he teaches us language to us very quickly, but in such depth we will
54 never forget

55

56 **AW: What is it that makes what he does challenging?**

57

58 Probably just trying to keep up with him

59

60 **AW: The pace of the work you are doing then?**

61

62 Yes

63

64 **AW: And you said the thing about depth?**

65

66 For example he may want us doing hundred of exercises but we will still learn the
67 point, he will teach it by talking about it, for example, we were learning about the
68 Greek alphabet and he talked about the... he summaries wouldn't just go on for ages so
69 he's got the balance of not just skimming over things.

70

71 **AW: Is this based on the subject knowledge because he knows so much about it?**

72

73 Yes.

74

75 The teachers I like and enjoy being in the lessons are the ones where they don't just
76 think of that period of time, the one hour and twenty minutes we have, the ones that
77 set the kids the work, make them do it, mark it and hand it back. The ones that think
78 about how to teach us and what's the best way to teach us... and he is really good, he
79 will teach but also joke around with you. He sets work, but he won't set a lot of work,
80 he will set one piece of very hard work and once you do that he will play a game with
81 you because its hard work and we have done it. The other thing I like is our RE teacher
82 he will always make it a challenging lesson as he will always keep talking to you about
83 what the subject is, and he will keep arguing with us, like a for or against argument, for
84 example he said the holocaust was not racist, and he doesn't agree with that but it was
85 because he wanted to challenge us and see how we would structure our arguments.

86

87 **AW: I like to see.... that's nice, and I think if you can do that and put so of it out**
88 **there, say something a bit new and different.**

89

90 Also if there's a really bit class and you are chatting to the teacher... what's happening,
91 I quite like my history teacher because he's very creative, and also in every lesson we
92 watch films about what we are learning about and we have to fill out a sheet about it, I
93 enjoy it and its relaxing because we get to watch a film but you also have to concentrate
94 and fill out the important things.

95

96 **AW: How do you think this challenges you? Does he do anything to challenge you in**
 97 **these lessons or is it more relaxed?**

98

99 It is sort of challenging because the data you are looking for isn't always the same
 100 questions, you need to really think about what they are saying.

101

102 **AW: Can you think of any one example of when you have done...in lessons and has**
 103 **really stretched you, something that has really changed the way you think and that**
 104 **has transformed your mind and has put you in a place you were not expecting to go?**

105

106 ... we don't know what we are going to study because we have so many topics and we
 107 only have one lesson every two weeks so we have to go really fast through them all and
 108 so we have no idea what we are going to do that lesson so he comes out with these
 109 things and we all think 'what is going on?' and he was just putting points out there. I
 110 like it because it is very challenging and you have to express your points, but in ways
 111 that will make other people think, so you really have to think about what you say
 112 instead of just going into this saying 'I think this'

113

114 **AW: How has your teacher achieved this?**

115

116 I think he just really really interacted with the class, like he most of the time ended up
 117 standing on a table in the corner of the classroom saying stuff, or he would just walk
 118 around. So he would never just be sat down at a desk saying stuff or writing on the

119 board, he hardly ever uses the board and he's quite young so he understands the minds
120 of teenagers a bit more.

121 Our geography teacher, he's does this random name pick up, so he doesn't just look at
122 the guy with their hand up, it also kind of encourages you to concentrate through the
123 lesson because there is always the chance your name could be picked.

124

125 **AW: It's all on computer then?**

126

127 Yes, its all on a website

128 .

129 In our... lessons, he would try and make us find examples of... things like the holocaust
130 or segregation in America in the 1960's, and we would tell them to him, and he would
131 say no, that's not racist and tell us something else, so he would argue on the wrong side
132 to it, but at the end of the lesson he would say, boys these things are racist and you
133 have got it wrong, they are racist, don't just say ok then that's I guess not racist, so he
134 was teaching us to stand up to racism by not standing up to racism.

135

136 **AW: I think that is a really interesting approach, its saying something no one was**
137 **expecting.**

138

139 One of the things I find is... she is quite old, but she's still a really good teacher as she's
140 more tolerant of talking to your friends while doing work and things like that which
141 some teachers are like stop talking and do the work whereas I feel I can do the work

142 better when I'm sitting next to someone doing the work too so we can talk about the
143 work while doing it.

144

145 **AW: If you were a teacher and you had a small group of very able students, what**
146 **would you do in those lessons?**

147

148 I am taking this from the perspective that I am quite clever and I am not going to be
149 like... I would look at the topic from my perspective and think to myself, how did I do
150 this and how did I learn it and how did I feel when I was being taught it when I was
151 young and then do that to them as well as if I was teaching them a language point I
152 would teach them the way I found it easiest to remember when I was a child and not
153 the way it's written down from the lesson pack.

154

155 What I would do is at the start get pupils to put their hands up for what they know
156 because when you get a question right you get a good feeling and then probably teach
157 them what they don't know, copying things into your book sometimes helps because
158 you have to think about it, and not just absently copy, you have to understand it and
159 put it simply so you can refer back to it for revision.

160

161 I know you have those teachers with lesson plans, but you have those who don't really
162 use the lesson plan and spend the whole lesson like reading straight off it and writing
163 straight onto the board and there isn't much interaction in that and therefore everyone
164 gets distracted at the back of the class and they wouldn't really notice because they

165 were too busy writing stuff on the board and they wouldn't really ask the class what
166 they would write in these situations and then maybe correcting them.

167

168 **AW: How would you be more interactive then? How would you insure that you**
169 **weren't sticking to the plan?**

170

171 I suppose they do need to stick to their plan, but maybe make the plan a bit different
172 maybe? So instead of having all the information on it, maybe just have a few questions
173 so that they can sort of ask pupils the questions during the lessons instead of telling
174 them it.

175

176 I suppose for MFL you could interact by maybe having a discussion with the class
177 saying how would you translate this and then maybe this is how it's translated and
178 then maybe for a starter give them a question they have never done before and ask
179 them "Could you do this?" and test them out before they start.

180

181 **AW: Makes sense, testing the prime knowledge.**

182

183 What I find helps is if I try and make it logical like a puzzle where you try and find
184 patterns or something that makes it easier to teach...

185

186 You can almost say this is a similar point to make because solving a puzzle is more fun
187 and is not really a lesson as you forget you are doing it.

188

189 And you are achieving a task.

190

191 It's almost like when you were being challenged with the opposing view, it's sort of

192 how do I solve this problem.

193

194 It's almost like I have just learnt how to do this and I didn't even realise.

195

196 **AW: What grades do you think you're going to get at GCSE? You are expected to do**

197 **well, you have been told you're going to do well, but what do you actually believe**

198 **you're going to get?**

199

200 Well we have to sit like 11 GCSEs and then maybe an add maths one if we get to do it, I

201 can imagine me doing the maths one but I can imagine me getting maybe an A or a B in

202 it. All of the others I may get A's and maybe A*'s. In the other ones, for example

203 chemistry, it says that everyone goes off with an A or A* so if I try really hard I should

204 be able too.

205

206 We are constantly reminded that our GCSEs are just round the corner for us but yes,

207 because we are being taught all of this we can achieve high grades like for example in

208 Classics. He says that if we learn all this we are nearly up to AS level. So it's kind of

209 weird when you talk to people for other schools and they say I have C in my GCSEs

210 when you are told that a C is really bad here. So it's kind of weird talking to people

211 outside of the school who have different expectations but here the expectations are very

212 high.

213

214 **AW: So what do you think you will be getting?**

215

216 A's and A*'s.

217

218 I mean my sister, she didn't go to a primary school or private school... which I don't

219 think I will be able to do but I still think I am going to get A's and hopefully A*'s too

220 but I find that the grades I get now the only grades I will do badly in, as in we have the

221 grades of 1 and 2, and then 3,4, and 5's are really bad and I am only on 1's and 2's and

222 the only ones I get 3's in are the subjects I really really don't like and the ones I will be

223 dropping at GCSE's.

224

225 ... course my parents will be disappointed if I got D but my sister hasn't done her

226 GCSE's yet but she is predicted A*'s in all her subjects and its sort of like I am in her

227 shadows and I have high expectations and there is a point where I will be very

228 disappointed if I do not get an A*, but in other subjects like English I would be happy

229 to take an A but that could change from now to the exams, but there are some subjects

230 where I don't really like them so I don't really mind...

231

232 **AW: So pretty much across the board A's and A*'s it looks like. And how does it feel,**233 **like the pressure to get those? Does it bother you that you are under this pressure?**

234

235 Well my sister got predicted good grades and her subjects are like Art as well. But the

236 only subject she did, she got 10A* and 1A and the one she got an A in was an Art

237 subject so I'm like 'Oh'. But it has never bothered me about the Maths and stuff
238 because I have never found myself in a situation where I do not really understand this,
239 I have never felt that so I think if I really put in the revision then what is there to go
240 wrong really. I mean I am taking two art subjects at GCSE and as I said that is like
241 relaxation for me so that takes the pressure off some of the other subjects.

242

243 **AW: So you feel some sort of pressure with your sister, but you agree that sort of**
244 **pressure is a good thing? Would anyone else have something to add?**

245

246 I haven't really thought about it yet, I don't really have any thoughts about it because
247 we are not constantly, well we are constantly reminded about it but I don't really think
248 about it because it is quite a while away and my sister didn't really get stressed and
249 didn't get paranoid so I think I will revise hard and it should all go well at the end of
250 the day.

251

252 Occasionally our teachers show us the GCSE results from previous years and normally
253 there's lots of As and A*s but occasionally there will be a B or a C and you always feel
254 that if that one B or C was you then you would feel kind of left out if 97% were A* you
255 would feel left out. You don't want to, it's not scary having to work hard, it's knowing
256 that you have to work hard.

257

258 **AW: Does it ever get too much?**

259

260 To be honest, I still have no idea of what I want to do in the future. Sometimes I feel
 261 kind of pressured with teachers asking me, 'Oh what do you want to do? Which
 262 subjects are you going to try and put more effort into? I don't know, I try and put an
 263 even amount of effort into each subject which maybe I ought to start putting a bit more
 264 effort into particular ones, but...

265

266 **AW: So are you saying there is more pressure, not on GCSEs and stuff, but more**
 267 **further on towards A Levels? Working towards them now and then University?**
 268 **How do you cope with that pressure?**

269

270 Well, I suppose it will depend on what I get for my GCSEs. I'll probably decide them.
 271 I guess some guys will almost know what they want to do now and it will probably be
 272 better for them when they get to that stage.

273

274 **AW: Okay so you sense the pressure being there but you don't really go along with**
 275 **it? It's not something you are really that bothered about but you try? Anyone else?**

276

277 I always select my subjects, I mean I don't really have a problem with any of my
 278 subjects we have to do, so I am myself especially after I had chosen my GCSEs I found
 279 myself straying away from the subjects I haven't taken and found myself talking and
 280 not really doing the work and I have stuff like my friend's going through a really hard
 281 time and talking to her a lot and the next thing.....and things like that. So in that sense
 282 it is a bit stressful like that, but it's not really 'Oh my God, I don't know what to do.'
 283 It's more like, 'Okay I might have to take a weekend and work really hard'.

284

285 **AW: Good, so you can relax? And would you agree?**

286

287 Because I am sometimes good at French. I don't mean to be disrespectful but the
288 teacher, he has now left, he only showed up to about 4 lessons and then got fired. I got
289 into Year 9 and didn't really know even basic and so I just crashed out. I'm really good
290 at French and didn't really know German. I didn't bother much in German. If you
291 learn too much German you have to forget other info in Physics or something and I got
292 that I couldn't really be bothered in German.

293

294 I try not to get stressed, I don't think it happens often. I try to do my homework
295 almost as soon as I get it so it's just done and out of the way.

296

297 **AW: What about the end of year exams? Do you feel pressured or not really?**

298

299 I think exam weeks are better than standard weeks. Because you get 4 or 5 games
300 lessons. People were talking more about mini softball tournament that happens in
301 between.

302

303 I have to plan ahead for exam week which I am sure most of the teachers wouldn't
304 agree with. I just find that it's not really stressful. We look at the exam timetable and
305 what day and if tomorrow I have Maths and English exam I will say I can't really revise
306 for English, I will revise for Maths now and have History exam, I've got to revise my

307 facts for History then I will be done with that. So go through it day by day and five
308 days later, it is all over.

309

310 Normally I try to revise about a week before – History revised on the Tuesday night so
311 when it comes round I have the same pattern, kind of same subject the week later.

312

313 There are some subjects, like English, that you can't really revise for, you might want to
314 revise where you put your commas, but that is more or less it. So I don't tend to do
315 much revision for those types of subjects, but for Biology where you need to know lots
316 of facts, and figures and references and whatever, I would spend more time doing my
317 revision for.

318

319 **AW: Well it seems kind of clear that all of you have a really clear sense of a revision**
320 **timetable – you actually plan ahead and you do revise, it might be a last minute one**
321 **but actually some people do that and do very well. Thank you for that.**

322

323 **AW: The final thing is how to you balance being a student who does really well at**
324 **school and in your exams with being popular at school? How does this fit together?**
325 **Because certainly being a cool kid and being a kid who works hard in most schools**
326 **doesn't work. What is your experience of that here?**

327

328 There are some in my Form room who I feel don't really who don't really have a social
329 life. I try to go out with friends from school in the area like Shireton so I talk to those
330 people quite a lot and I talk to people from my old school who went to School EM so I

331 talk to them as well and I find that going out at the weekends and going to sleepovers
332 and going to people's houses and stuff. I feel like I am 14. In five years I'm not going
333 to know many of these people.

334

335 In some ways I find it the other way round. In Primary school if I got top marks,
336 people at the back of the room would sigh people would sigh and it got a bit
337 embarrassing. Here, I am not quite at the top of the class any more so, sometimes in a
338 recent Maths test, I didn't do too well on it and everyone in the class was teasing me
339 about it. At my primary school you would never have teased the person who came at
340 the bottom, it was always teasing the person at the top. So it's switched around.

341

342 I think that there is a realisation, the people who do well in school are going to have a
343 better future than those who are like 'I'm Cool - Yeah - I got 14% in Maths - who cares?

344

345 In Years 7 and 8 I didn't have a social life. I used to spend time after school tucked up
346 in bed playing my Nintendo DS, or reading story books or going on the computer. I
347 didn't really go into town, didn't really talk with people outside my class, didn't really
348 go outside. In Year 9 I kind of got fed up of this. I took up football and got friends
349 through that. I think I'm quite funny. There's people that know my name and I don't
350 know them. Those in Years 7 and 8 think I'm the culprit in their football events. Some
351 people think I'm annoying but some people think I'm funny.

352

353 I think because here we all work hard, we all can get on. Here, working hard can also
354 relate to you being cool I guess. You can work hard and have a social life.

355

356 **AW: So because of the culture of this school it is okay to do well? You realise if you**
357 **work hard now, in the future, it's worth it?**

358

359 Yeah – I think everyone here works hard

360

361 **AW: I appreciate all of your answers. The very final thing, what do you want to be**
362 **after you finish your studies at school? What are your aspirations? Where do you**
363 **want to go, what do you want to do?**

364

365 Sciences I am okay at. I was at the careers event and a lot of the jobs require science
366 degrees to do it. I also saw a Journalist and he said the only degree he had was one in
367 Maths and one in Biology. I don't know, that seems to be a competitive environment
368 for me and I'm not too keen on that. I will maybe just take some sciences and maths
369 and see where it goes.

370

371 My A-Levels will affect where I go to University. I'm kind of aiming for Oxford
372 perhaps or Cambridge – I'm not really sure what I want to do. I guess I'm going to go
373 with what I enjoy and see where that will take me. And perhaps plan ahead if there's
374 something I particularly want to do.

375

376 I never wanted to be a banker or work in an office. That really never appeals to me. I
377 really enjoy art. Me and my friend started off a band and we had a plan to go to LA and
378 stuff and that's not really going to happen. So I was thinking I would probably go and

379 get a degree to be a designer or something because I play a lot of video games because
380 I'm cool like that and because I am good at Art maybe incorporating the two. Because I
381 really enjoy that of Maths or something.

382

383 My dad went to Oxford – he took Microbiology and then became an accountant. His
384 Dad left school at 16 in New Zealand and forged a successful heating company and
385 that enabled my dad to go to Oxford. So it would be nice to go to Oxford or
386 Cambridge. To be honest, I wouldn't really want to be an accountant. My dad just sits
387 at home all day on the computer like a zombie. My grandpa said the right job will pop
388 up sometime so I am just waiting for it to pop up I guess.

389

390 **AW: Thank you very much. It's been very interesting. Thank you for your open and**
391 **honest answers and I hope this makes for some good research. Do you have any**
392 **questions about what this is all about?**

393

394 Are you like training teachers?

395 **AW: Hopefully this will be used to help teachers. It is academic research in the area**
396 **of Gifted students which is quite lacking**

397 Is this related to Gifted and Talented register like at primary school?

398 **AW: It is exactly – you are probably still on a G&T register. You may not know**
399 **about that and that is perfectly reasonable.**

400 At primary school they were saying that even the not so intelligent people would be
401 among the top students at other schools. We see ourselves as average, not elite.
402 50% of students get 5 As to Cs in those schools.

403 I'd be shocked if got C and upset if I got a B. Most people think I need to pass the exam,
404 whereas we think I need to get an A in this exam. We are aiming higher.

405 It is a privilege to go to this school.

406 **AW: More pressure than other schools?**

407 No experience of this.

408

409 My sister went to EM school and I think it's the friends you choose. All her friends
410 went out and partied and got drunk and stuff, but she and her friends all got really
411 good grades.

412

413 **AW: Why do you think that was?**

414 I don't know, maybe, I don't think you have to make a choice between having fun and
415 getting good grades, you just need to make sure you take some time out. After exams
416 she was always going out but a week before the exams she was studying. It's about
417 making priority right at the right time.

418

419

420

421

422

423

424

425

426

427

1 **Appendix 22: Parent Focus Group, School C**

2 **11th July, 2011 (Sample Selected from Parents of Y9 pupil interview participants)**

3 **Interviewer: JW**

4

5 **JIW: What do you want for your son from the teaching and learning provided here?**

6 Mrs. N: For me I want him to be an independent learner. To be able to stand on his
7 own two feet, but obviously within a supportive environment. I also want him to feel
8 happy and confident that he can ask when he needs help. And he will get the correct
9 help.

10 **JIW: Do you want to come in on that one?**

11 Mrs. AB: What you are looking for from the teaching is inspirational teachers who
12 provide not just the national curriculum, but to challenge and take the boys to a
13 different place, depending on what their understanding and specialisms are. And I
14 think that you want them to take them beyond their existing thinking.

15 **JIW: That's interesting – I'm coming back to the "happy and confident " comment –**
16 **do you think that our teaching and learning systems do that? I mean when it comes**
17 **to the business of the classroom, are we giving them that kind of quality?**

18 Mrs. AB: On the whole yes, you are – some of the relationships Billy has struck up
19 with some of his teachers. He tells me things I'm surprised at, but to me it shows a sign
20 of a good relationship between a good teacher who knows how to have a bit of fun
21 with the boys, but then carry that on into directed and proper learning. So they're
22 winning the confidence of the boys as well.

23 **JIW: Yes, the boys love that as well.**

24 Mrs. N: I think it's quite interesting how they change depending on what teacher they
25 have as well. Last year in certain subjects he obviously wasn't connecting with the
26 teachers, but this year in a lot of them they have different teachers so his enthusiasm
27 and results and confidence – the increase is incredible. I'm really surprised.

28 **JIW: Can I come back to your point about taking the boys to a different place? And**
29 **doing more than the national curriculum. Any examples?**

30 Mrs. N: I am thinking of the fact that you have very able children in the school and
31 therefore – the national curriculum is to cover all pupils across all levels, so you assume
32 the boys find that quite comfortable within their educational abilities. You are looking
33 for someone to develop their interests further – perhaps on different subjects outside
34 that.

35 **JIW: Do you think we do that?**

36 Mrs. N: I feel that you probably don't. Because I don't feel there's much enhancement
37 in the extra-curriculum. I envisaged there would be lunchtime lectures, external
38 speakers, more trips and visits.

39 **JIW: So it's about deepening subject knowledge with activities outside the**
40 **classroom?**

41 Mrs. N: Yes

42 **JIW: OK and what about expectations at GCSE and beyond?**

43 Mrs. AB: This is me without consulting my son at all! I would like to think that Billy
44 will have a rounded education and he will enjoy his schooldays. And he will look back
45 on those and think that was great, but that they will set him up and show him what is
46 ahead rather than focussing on the here and now in Year 9. I know he struggles with
47 that – he has no idea what he wants to do for example. For me, I would like to see a
48 little more inspiring children when you are teaching them Physics for example, to say
49 well you can go on and do this with it. Probably this already happens – maybe he’s not
50 absorbing that. I think education for me is something to get you to a good place in life
51 to get yourself a good job. If you’re academic I think that’s what you need to use to
52 make your way in life.

53 **JIW: In your conversations with him does that involve concentrating on GCSE quite**
54 **materially – what is it you’re aspiring for him to achieve?**

55 Mrs. AB: It does a little bit – when we looked at GCSE options I was very much sitting
56 on the fence by letting him choose what he wanted. He had fixed ideas about some
57 things and then other things he really didn’t know. So we tried to direct him but he
58 didn’t want to do certain things – I don’t really know the reason. I think sometimes a
59 certain person might be in the class – which is a terrible reason, but that actually is a
60 reason for him. Not a teacher, another pupil he just didn’t want to be with. On other
61 occasions he maybe couldn’t be inspired by the subject. And I’m thinking well it might
62 be nice if you did that. But then I want him to be a free-thinker and to go the direction
63 he wants go as well. So it’s very hard to get that balance between, yes I want to push
64 you through your education, but to what end? And to let him come up with his
65 reasons.

66 **JIW: So the reason for doing the subjects was how it might be on the ground doing**
 67 **those subjects rather than the grade at the end.**

68 Mrs. AB: Certainly for two out of the three options, he loved those subjects.
 69 Absolutely knew from almost week one of Year 7 that that's what he wanted to do. The
 70 third one it was: oh, I don't really know, I'm not sure, some people are doing that. And
 71 there was a little bit of - he felt he was not good enough at certain things, so he
 72 wouldn't chose it for that reason. Not that that bothered me particularly. And as I say
 73 this issue of maybe having someone he didn't like in his class.

74 Mrs. N: I think going through option time, Sam chose them because there was very
 75 limited choice and if he chose the ones he was interested then it's quite easy. If he chose
 76 the ones he's interested in then it gets quite easy because hopefully he'd enjoy them
 77 more and go on to do better things. I think Dick's (*other son*) aspiration is more - a
 78 couple of years ago he decided he wanted to go to an American university so he'd been
 79 sorting out how to get there - well two years ago he started doing the SATs Maths
 80 papers. **[JIW: for American Universities?]** Well they're online - he was downloading
 81 them during the summer holidays and found that he was... **[JIW: That's really**
 82 **interesting.]** And that came out of...I don't know where that comes out of. We almost
 83 put to (?) him to stay in the UK. **[JIW: Not cheap to go to the States!]** It's really
 84 expensive, I think. It will be here. So that's what his driver is. And that's still bubbling
 85 along in the background. But then I think - to go back to career choices - it would be
 86 quite nice that even earlier you could start to talking to them to see... either explaining
 87 what the options are for them or to see if they have any current plans at the moment.
 88 And I know they change, because you know...

89 **JIW: Do you think we do enough on that? We have a Careers Convention earlier in**
 90 **the year. Is that helpful?**

91 Mrs. N: We didn't attend because it was quite early and on the other side of that he
 92 had decided what he wanted to do already. I know my answers quite conflicting.

93 **JIW: At what point would you be disappointed with what he achieves here, either at**
 94 **GCSE or A-level?**

95 Mrs. N: If he doesn't get into university.

96 Mrs. AB: I don't think I'd ever be disappointed with the school. I'd like to think I
 97 wouldn't be disappointed with my son. If he doesn't get what needs to get in, that
 98 would just be the way it is. I think I'm very accepting, and I'd just take things as they
 99 are. If I think he hasn't worked, if he has sat back and not been pushed. I don't expect
 100 that he won't get the support he needs, being here ... I guess is what I'm saying.

101 Mrs. N: It's almost like an assumption really. You're at this fantastic school.

102 **JIW: When we look at the predicted grades, we find that they should virtually all be**
 103 **getting 4 or 5 A* grades and the rest As. There's a level of work that has to go into**
 104 **achieving that.**

105 Mrs. N: It's quite hard to decide if they're doing enough. Because you know that
 106 they're bright. But are they working hard enough? For us it's our first child. So we
 107 don't know the system. It's always easier the second time round. He doesn't seem to
 108 be spending a lot of time doing his homework. He seems to be getting by in doing that.

109 **JIW: That's why we are doing things like the IGCSE and Additional Maths. But it**
 110 **sounds like your expectations are in line with ours. What about supporting their**
 111 **learning at home? What are the tips and tricks you have got there?**

112 Mrs. N: We've sort of left him to it for the moment. a) We think it's too early to put the
 113 down if we felt that we needed to, because I think it's quite a long time to go to the
 114 end Year 13. Also I think it's important for him to learn how to learn and how to
 115 deliver. We feel that he's getting that right. We don't want him turning off and to rebel
 116 against pressure, so we're quite hands off. When I was telling him I was going to talk to
 117 you about this focus group for parents, he said "You know I think I'm quite self -
 118 sufficient you know - I do it off my own back." He said, "Just to make sure we get our
 119 stories straight..." Well that's interesting because that's just what we think we give to
 120 you as well.

121 **JIW: We do encounter the other approach – more hands-on. You know there are pros**
 122 **and cons about every way. How about yourself?**

123 Mrs AB: Yes, very similar. We feel my son needs to learn how to learn by himself.
 124 We've had a few ups and downs. This year ... I don't know if he's a typical 14 year old
 125 boy, but he believes in doing his homework the night before it's due rather than when
 126 it's set. Which is fine if he doesn't have cricket, or something on. And I've been saying
 127 to him for months, "Please do your homework when it's set or at least so we can plan
 128 ahead." And he doesn't and consequently things have got missed. I wonder if that's
 129 where the school can come down because he doesn't listen to me. So I'd be fully
 130 supportive of the school if ... ! (Laughter)

131 **JIW: Should the school be doing more to support your son? If so what is it?**

132 Mrs. AB: I feel the one area where Billy has struggled, is understanding what it means
133 to revise. He can do consistently well during the year, but when it comes to exams he
134 possibly underachieves slightly because he doesn't set himself out a revision plan. We
135 tried to get him to do that this year, but he couldn't stick to it. He was all over the place.

136 **JIW: We do that in Year 11, but you make a very good point. We should do that**
137 **earlier.**

138 Mrs. N: It's a very good habit. Dan's just the same he did have a timetable for the
139 exams. Last year he had a two week timetable, this year he thought he had to have an
140 extra week, so he had a three week timetable. The first day he had Geography on there.
141 20 minutes later he came downstairs and said "I've done Geography." I said, "Oh, what
142 topic have you done?" "I've done all of it." (Laughter) But then what he doesn't
143 understand is that he understands the topic and the subject and he can remember it
144 and he's memorised the lesson, but having to know that you have got to recall the
145 information, set it out in a meaningful fashion and bring it all together – that concept
146 hasn't hit home yet.

147 **JIW: So having those frameworks in place – you can always work on that.**

148 Mrs. N: It would be helpful to have a curriculum map. It's very hard to know what
149 they are actually meant to be doing on a termly basis – I don't need to know lesson by
150 lesson, but on a topic basis that would be quite helpful.

151 **JIW: We are having to look at that because of controlled assessments. We could have**
 152 **a sliding scale over the two years in the Key Stage up to GCSE as to when things are**
 153 **coming up.**

154 Mrs. N: Because at primary school, there's always the Romans in this term, the Vikings
 155 in this term and they're covering the "face" in French and that sort of thing. Because
 156 your school is a significant step for them and therefore it is their world ... and I think
 157 it's important - they're more independent and the feedback is minimal. So just to
 158 understand what they're confronted with.

159 **JIW: The map idea is a good one to revisit. Is there any advice you would give to**
 160 **parents in your position about parenting or schooling of a high achieving child -**
 161 **advice to teachers or parents?**

162 Mrs. N: Say that again?

163 **JIW: What advice would you give about high achieving boys, having parented one**
 164 **yourself, would you give to parents or teachers?**

165 Mrs. N: I think it's quite hard because I don't think we are there yet. I feel we are in the
 166 middle of the process. So I don't know if we've been successful or unsuccessful because
 167 we are still on the journey from Year 7 to Year 11. Hopefully we have done the right
 168 amount of parenting for him to be performing OK. Other than that we'll let you know
 169 in three years' time!

170 Mrs. AB: I think it's difficult because there are probably two groups of parents. There
 171 are what I would call the pushy parents who are very motivated to get their child to
 172 achieve. And I think if you start to try and give them advice on what to do. I'm not sure

173 is that would necessarily be helpful to the child. I think there's the other group where
 174 you've got a child who's come from say a primary school where they stand out very
 175 obviously from everyone else and they feel very self-conscious about it - almost don't
 176 want to be noticed because they are different. And I think in that case it's good to
 177 encourage those parents and say, "Look, it's fine ...: don't be embarrassed that your
 178 child is a high achiever."

179 **JIW: Does that happen? That's new to me.**

180 Mrs. N: I think it's interesting about this whole process - we weren't aware that Sam
 181 was in the Gifted and Talented Group. It's only when we got the letter the other week -
 182 we were "Oh, what does that mean?!"

183 **JIW: The school's policy is that all our boys are gifted and talented. But I think this**
 184 **point about it being something potentially to be embarrassed about or at least self-**
 185 **conscious about is really interesting, (Mrs. AB: Yeah!) because I think the children**
 186 **sometimes feel this quite a lot. They are a bit different.**

187 Mrs. AB: I think - absolutely! - when Billy was at primary school - he was just
 188 different, he didn't ever really fit in to be quite honest. He didn't have a particularly
 189 enjoyable primary school experience. And suddenly he comes somewhere where he
 190 meets people like him. And it's wonderful! Y'know - that's the message I would like to
 191 give to people: there are other boys like your child out there who maybe don't fit the
 192 social norms of those around them and might get teased or bullied because of it, but
 193 don't despair because you've got to encourage them for who they are and have the
 194 confidence in themselves.

195 Mrs. W: Don's made a few observations in that in the setting that's gone on – the
196 popular boys aren't in the top of the set and you see a clear division. My youngest son
197 in Year 7 has noticed the same thing already. And I thought that's very perceptive.
198 (JIW: I'll let you know what the boys said about this..) He does appreciate that he's in a
199 selective school – he's inferring he's more comfortable because there are likeminded
200 children around him.

201 **JIW: Do you think there are any other questions we should be asking?**

202 Mrs. W: Normally think of these questions on the drive home! Mrs. AB: Same!

203

204 John Weeds

205 Thursday, 11 August 2012

Appendix 23: Gifted and Talented Eligibility Criteria (NAGTY 2006)

NAGTY accept members on the basis of academic performance and potential. You may apply for membership using any of the following criteria:

- Key Stage 2 SATS: combined raw score in the national top 5% in English and maths. You can access this information from: www.keytosuccess.dfes.gov.uk/schools
 - Key Stage 3 SATs – an examined Level 8 in mathematics or a level 8 teacher assessment in another subject at the end of year 9 (For talent subjects please see talent guidelines)
 - Cognitive Ability Test 3 – A Standardised Age Score of 129 or above in one battery (Verbal Reasoning, Non- Verbal Reasoning, or Quantitative Reasoning)
 - Midyis Test – A Standardised Age Score of 129 or above in one battery (Maths, Non-Verbal Reasoning Or Vocabulary)
 - Yellis – Standardised Age Score mean of 126 or above
 - World Class Tests (mathematics or problem solving) – merit or distinction
 - NFER Verbal Reasoning and Non-Verbal Reasoning Series – standardised age mean score of 129 or above
 - Test of general cognitive ability administered by a chartered educational psychologist (e.g. WISC, Stanford-Binet, BAS) – WISC or Stanford-Binet performance at or above 95th percentile. BAS GCA standardised score of 126 or above.
 - GCSE / GNVQ – Capped point score from the best 8 subjects of 58 points or above (where A* = 8 points, A = 7 points etc.) or score of 428 or above (where A* = 58 points, A = 52 points etc.)
 - Other test allied to university entrance (e.g. TGA) – performance at or above 95th percentile.
-
- A reference from a teacher or other education professional. This may be for a particular subject or where perceived potential is not demonstrated in assessment scores.
 - References must be supplied on headed paper, signed and dated by a relevant education professional. References must clearly indicate the criteria on which the judgement is based.
 - Evidence of outstanding achievement in an academic related activity pursued outside of school e.g. success in national level debating competition or outstanding performance in a master class, AimHigher or other gifted and talented programme
 - An independent assessment identifying ability in the top 5% ability range e.g. report from a chartered educational psychologist.
 - A reference from a teacher or other education professional which clearly indicates the criteria on which the judgement is based, which must be supplied on headed paper, signed and dated by a relevant education professional.
 - The reference may make reference to, or be accompanied by evidence of one or more of the following:
 - outstanding performance at school at a level considerably higher than that expected for the child's age,
 - outstanding performance in vocational grade tests in music, dance or drama
 - attendance at a centre for advanced training in music or dance

Appendix 24: Extracts from Learning Journal, noting reflections on pupil group interview technique

Final comments on pilot i-v¹ process (School A) 25/2/11

Consider own identity in this process: note how ... the need was felt to dress down – jeans, jumper – as opposed to day-job uniform, i.e. suit, tie. Helped self relax – ice-breaking went well as a result (comment by AW (assistant) that Molly sat cross legged on i-v chair...) The researcher/i-ver persona adopted felt comfortable and conducive to managing process effectively. ... self-referentially the mode of speech was unconsciously adapted to assist flow (“hi”, “cheers”, football etc.)

Final prep. for School B interviews 20/3/11

Listen to i-v audio files (from School A interviews)

Read thro’ transcripts and adapt questions

Mon/Tue 21/22 Mar – practice recording via Blackberry

Comments on recordings:

Emphasis on the “why?”

Allow interviewees to develop ideas

Allow discussion to develop

Questions to develop – re. learning mentor

Comments on questions:

- Bit long on subject specific material
- Get into attitudes quicker
- Praise gets a bit cloying – don’t overdo
- Favourite subjects bit slightly pre-empt the attitudinal stuff

¹ i-v = interview

